Sister Joan Marie Lechner, O.S.U.

Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces

An Historical Investigation of the General and Universal Ideas Used in All Argumentation and Persuasion With Special Emphasis on the Educational and Literary Tradition of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

$4.00

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The doctrine of the commonplaces is as ancient as the history of rhetoric and logic. Though the commonplaces as such no longer form a part of our intellectual equipment, just as rhetoric no longer forms a part of the academic curriculum, they were through the Renaissance period a vital element in western culture. Just how important they were has become apparent only in recent years as modern scholars have brought to light their effect on style and literary form and on modes of thought.

Sister Joan Marie has utilized the latest findings of scholarly research to provide the first complete study of the commonplace tradition in its entirety. In *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces*, she explores the tradition as a whole and presents an exposition of the commonplaces as interpreted in cetrain educational and literary works of the Renaissance.

The "commonplace" like many another concept of western thought had its origin in Greek philosophy. The English word itself is a literal rendering of the Greek *topos koinos* or the Latin *locus communis*. Beginning with Aristotle, a *topos* is a heading or, literally, a "place" where one finds an argument. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguished two types of places, the "com-

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SISTER JOAN MARIE LECHNER, O.S.U.

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Preface

We have moved far from the time when the term "commonplace" had a good rather than a depreciatory meaning. Through the ancient world, the medieval world, the Renaissance, and even later, it was thought honorable and indeed commendably enterprising to avail oneself of preprocessed material and modes of expression. Indeed, laying in a store of such material was regarded as in great part the aim of education. Only as the modern world took shape did men find it difficult to tolerate openly the seeming lack of originality which such a tradition fostered. Gradually the concept of "commonplace" was downgraded until it came to mean only something worn, used up, generally worthless.

But even while commonplaces remained in good repute, the ways in which they were conceived presented problems. No one, from antiquity on, had quite cleared up what sort of validity the concept of "place" might have as applied to mental processes. "Places" were sometimes passages in authors or passages composed by oneself, or alternately were classifications in which such passages were stored or in which ideas in general were "stored." There was no universal agreement as to just what was signified when it was said that certain places were "common," despite Aristotle's attempt to establish the view that this meant that they were sources of material exploitable com-

monly for any and all subjects. Moreover, the entire apparatus of the commonplaces was entangled in a puzzling way with training in praising or vilifying persons or things. But despite its vagaries, and indeed perhaps because of them, the imagery of the "places" in which one could store knowledge strongly influenced psychological and literary theory and eventually interacted with Renaissance typographical developments.

Although Ernst Robert Curtius has given a new currency (and his own somewhat special meaning) to the concept of the places or *topoi,* and—together with some others, notably Professor Don Cameron Allen—has dealt with some individually recurrent commonplace themes found protracted over long stretches of literary and intellectual history, there is still nothing like an adequate guide to collections of commonplaces or to literature concerned with the commonplaces. One might even conjecture that there never will be an adequate guide. The task of drawing one up might be too great. A few months spent scratching the surface of the literature of the "places," massive, untidy, chaotically repetitious, turgid with the washings of schoolroom and lecture hall, will convince anyone that the commonplaces spread like mold —Theodore Roethke's "mother mildew," certifying both death and life—through the literature and thought of antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and later centuries, working their way in and out of florilegia, anthologies, books of "sentences" and of other sorts of sayings, question books, and miscellanies of all sorts. In this world the collections borrow from one another and from other works with wanton indiscrimination, until one loses all sense of source and direction.

Still, the very massiveness of the commonplace tradition demands that it be somehow dealt with. One must

begin somewhere. Samplings of what one or another period made of it all will greatly help. In the present work Sister Joan Marie Lechner, O.S.U., reports on a sampling, examining what the concept of the commonplaces came to in the Renaissance mind. She has cast her net rather wide, but has done so with reason. Renaissance concepts of the commonplaces were international in their origins and effects, for they were sustained chiefly by writings in Latin, the language in which the formal educational system in all subjects resolutely sustained itself. Vernacular works, and hence national literary traditions, concerned with the commonplaces have no sizable independent existence in the Renaissance but appear inevitably as excrescences on the massive and age-old Latin substratum. If Sister Joan Marie's conclusions are not always final, and if they do not uncover always clear-cut and neat patterns in the material she works with, it is because this is the way matters stood. The tradition was variable, often uncertain of itself, possessing indubitable pedagogical value in its own setting, but quite unstable in some basic ways. This interpretation of some of the commonplace tradition not only opens our understanding further to the ways of thought and expression in an earlier age but also invites, as good scholarship commonly does, further and still more detailed research.

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24 May 1962

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RENAISSANCE CONCEPTS

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Introduction

Any definition of a commonplace, whether it be the *locus communis* of Latin, the *topos koinos* of Greek, or the commonplace of English, fails to register the vagaries of the term as it appears in intellectual history. Only in recent years have scholars investigating the rhetorical tradition become aware of the importance of the "places" in both spoken and written literature and of the complexity of the tradition dealing with the "places" in the logic and rhetoric of the schools from classical antiquity through the Renaissance. Research reveals that not even the rhetoricians themselves—Greek, Latin, or Renaissance—were always certain of just what the "places" implied; they were accustomed to use the term synonymously for topic (its most general meaning), thesis, passage, oration, and a score of other things.

The doctrine of the "places" is as ancient as the history of rhetoric and logic. Generally, a formal definition of the term begins with Aristotle's statement that a *topos* is a place (apparently a kind of locale in the imagination) where one goes to seek arguments to be used in proving cases, in persuading an audience, or in teaching.[1] The *topos* was the seat of the argument or, when transferred

1. *The Works of Aristotle,* trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924). Vol I: *Topica* i. 9. 103ᵇ.

to the memory, as Lane Cooper expands the meaning, it was something like a pigeonhole in the mind where one went to seek material for the oration.[2] In his *Rhetoric,* Aristotle divided topics according to genus and species or according to "common" and "specific" kinds. The common topics, in which were found the universal forms of all arguments, were used by all men and by all sciences. Although scholars have enumerated as many as 360 commonplaces in Aristotle's *Topics,*[3] it appears that in some sense, strictly speaking, Aristotle subsumes all commonplaces under four heads; possible and impossible, greater and less, past fact and future fact, magnification and minimization.[4] These were the commonplaces and proper subjects of both dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms. The specific topics were, in effect, subdivisions of the common ones; they were peculiar to specific subjects such as physics, politics, or ethics, and, since they were related to a particular species, they could not be applied to any other subject.[5] Subsequent definitions of the commonplace stemmed from Aristotle's concept of the "common" and "specific" topics, and, however much they varied, these definitions generally retained the basic essentials found in Aristotle, although in the over-all tradition, the common topics or commonplaces far overshadow the special.

With the conception of the *loci communes* as topics and seats of arguments, as theses, passages, and the like, another concept of the commonplace has apparently al-

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2. Lane Cooper (trans. and ed.), *The Rhetoric of Aristotle: An Expanded Translation* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1932), pp. xiv and 155.

3. Walter J. Ong, S.J., *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 122.

4. Aristotle, Vol. XI, *Rhetorica* i. 22. 1392 a.

5. *Ibid.* i. 2. 1358 a.

ways coexisted. This is the idea of the commonplace as a little oration or as a "speech-within-a-speech." Aphthonius, Theon, Hermogenes, and Aristotle among ancient Greek writers, Cicero, Quintilian, and the author of the *Ad Herennium* among ancient Latin writers, and a great number of medieval and Renaissance writers considered the commonplace as a speech amplifying virtue or depreciating vice. In these rhetoricians' way of looking at the matter, certain little speeches which were regularly inserted in longer orations for purposes of amplification, exposition, persuasion, and description were thought of as "commonplaces" because they provided ready-made "arguments" which in some way magnified (or minimized) a subject. In other words, one of Aristotle's four commonplaces, magnification and minimization, came to dominate the others and demand preferential treatment, even to the extent that it was regarded as a special kind of "theme." These "speeches-within-a-speech" were usually found in a definite place in the oration, near the epilog or conclusion, where they served primarily for persuasion.

In the progressive development of the concept of the commonplace, which this study intends to treat, this double aspect of the place, as a *locus* or seat of arguments and as a "speech-within-a-speech," will be kept in mind. But other facts must also be kept in mind, that is, the relation of the commonplace to eloquence and the embellishment of orations, and to moral philosophy.

The commonplace, through its association with rhetoric, has always been related to adornment and enrichment of language. Aristotle, although stressing the philosophical nature of the *topos,* demanded for it, along with restraint and conciseness, a certain polish and beauty of style. Book Three of his *Rhetoric* is devoted to a discussion of rhetorical style as an effective instrument in argu-

mentation. Cicero regarded a speech as being rendered "distinguished or brilliant" when some common topics had been introduced into it:

> All the ornaments of style, which lend charm and dignity, are lavished on common topics, as well as everything which in the invention of matter or thought contributes to weight and grandeur. Therefore, though these are topics "common" to many cases, they are not common to many orators. For they cannot be treated with elegance and dignity, as their very nature requires, except by those who through long practice have acquired a vast store of words and ideas.[6]

In this passage Cicero thinks of the topics as storehouses of arguments which contained those key ideas which were *constantly* needed and used in every oration—an interpretation of "common" already different from Aristotle's. The very ubiquity of these ideas in the realm of discourse gave them an added importance which Cicero recognized as worthy of the greatest elegance and dignity.

Quintilian, too, acknowledged the usefulness of a more brilliant style for the commonplaces in the sense of "speeches-within-speeches":

> In arguments of a minor character the language and thought should be as appropriate and as familiar as possible. But if the subject be one of real importance every kind of ornament should be employed, . . . the more unattractive the natural appearance of anything, the more does it require to be seasoned by charm of style; moreover, an argument is often less suspect when thus

6. Cicero, *De inventione,* trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), ii. 15. 49-50.

disguised, and the charm with which it is expressed makes it all the more convincing to our audience.[7]

Embellishment had a twofold role to play when making its appearance in the oration, to add dignity and weight to the importance of the subject, and to make persuasion more effective by the charm of style. Quintilian, like Cicero, regards the commonplaces as important not simply because they furnish arguments for all cases, but because they are particularly apt for important cases. The concept "common" is here transmuted into "cardinal."

The Renaissance orators, since they had been trained in the classical tradition, sought for eloquence in their writing and speaking. Eloquence was the perennial theme of their books of instruction. The art of persuasion was grounded in the commonplaces in that the successful orator had to possess a style of "milky richness," which meant that he had to be ingenious in inventing a flow of eloquent commonplaces which would capture the emotions and decisions of the judges.

The stylistic attention lavished on the commonplaces in the oration was but the outward manifestation of the deference commanded by their implicit moral content. In the very nascent stages of their existence, the places had been allied with moral philosophy. In the early dialogues of Plato, Socrates demanded of Protagoras a justification of the Sophists' claim that rhetoric, with its profusion of places, was capable of teaching virtue.[8] This is nothing more than Plato's defense of the Greek concept of true

7. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria,* trans. H. E. Butler (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), v. 14. 33-35.

8. Plato, *Protagoras,* trans. W. R. M. Lamb (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924), IV, 320-26.

education as a kind of moral training of both body and soul. Opposition to the Sophists' dialectic and rhetoric, which made use of the places for arguing but neglected their moral content, was based on the accusation that virtue was not being taught. Plato attacks the Sophistic education in the *Gorgias,* in which he proclaims that to convince an audience without pursuing any ideal was nothing but the creation of a practical means to provide intellectual instruments by which to achieve immoral ends.[9]

From the very beginning, then, the topics of rhetoric, because they dealt with key ideas, and hence with those likely to be adaptable and "common" to every human situation, tended to gravitate toward the themes of virtue and vice. The epideictic oration existed but for this one purpose, the praise or blame of someone. The persuasion of the judge, in a judicial speech, was made more certain if the orator was a man of blameless character. Isocrates was convinced that this ability to move one's hearers resulted from long training in choosing subjects which had a certain conformity with virtue and that this exercise of invention had a definite moral value for the orator. In the *Antidosis,* he promised such a reward to the wise orator:

> In the second place, he will select from all the actions of men which bear upon his subject those examples which are the most illustrious and the most edifying; and, habituating himself to contemplate and appraise such examples, he will feel their influence not only in the preparation of a given discourse but in all the actions of his life.[10]

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9. *Gorgias,* V, 425 ff.

10. Isocrates, *Antidosis,* trans. George Norlin (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), II, 273.

When rhetoric and the places moved to the Roman world, the emphasis was even more on virtuous action than in the Greek world. The orators, both in training and practice, were concerned with the practical inculcation of an ethical ideal, a system of moral values and a way of life in conformity with it. The moral values which were desired were found embodied in the commonplaces. With the coming of Christianity, the Fathers of the Church and the medieval writers, who exploited the commonplaces of rhetoric and dialectic for theological purposes, not only retained the moral virtues of the pagan world, but complemented them with the theological virtues. In the Renaissance, the shift of ethical emphasis veered toward the pagan ideal again and the moral virtues became the defining norm for the practical life.

This persistent awareness of virtue and vice, of praise and blame, so permeates the tradition of the places that one begins to suspect that in actual pedagogical practice the praise of virtue and the excoriation of vice was the only type of writing and speaking for which the student was formally trained. Certainly modern interest in narrative and expository writing has little place in formal literary education from ancient Greece and Rome through the Renaissance. The exemplum, the panegyric, the fable, the encomium and vituperation, are but a few of the rhetorical exercises which are fundamentally rooted in the commonplaces and rely on attitudes toward virtue or vice to prove their case. A writer such as Shakespeare seems incapable by training of writing about anything outside a virtue-vice—that is, an intensely personal and human—frame of reference.

The various aspects of the commonplace which have been discussed in the preceding pages will enable us to

establish some basic concept to be used as a working definition or norm for the succeeding chapters. Traditionally, beginning with Aristotle, a *topos* is a heading, or, literally, a "place" where one finds an argument. There are two kinds of topics, the "common" or general which could be applied to any oration and to any case and which included the commonplaces of possible and impossible, greater or less, past fact and future fact, and magnification and minimization, and the "specific" topic which referred only to particular subjects. This is a working description of a place *(locus, topos,* topic), but the concept as it appears and operates historically in the logical and rhetorical tradition is by no means so neat as this description suggests. It is protean and—one must allow—often quite confused.

The doctrine of the "places" *(loci, topoi),* as we have already mentioned, is as ancient as the history of rhetoric and logic. Only in recent years have scholars investigating the rhetorical tradition become aware of the importance of the places in their effect on style and literary form and on modes of thought.

Charles Sears Baldwin is, perhaps, one of the earliest of these scholars who charted the course for extensive exploration in the area of rhetoric and the places. His three volumes include studies of the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance theories of rhetoric and poetics together with the relation of the topics to literary productions.

In 1944, T. W. Baldwin's two-volume work on Shakespeare appeared with its mass of information on the educational tradition of the sixteenth century. Baldwin gives much space to the treatment of the commonplaces with respect to their educational importance and their influence in the literary art of Shakespeare.

More recently Ernst Curtius in *European Literature*

and the Latin Middle Ages (1953) has surveyed the place of the topics in literature but in a less conventional manner. He approaches the theory of the places in a somewhat more doctrinaire manner, disregarding the real complications in the traditional handling of the topics and adopting a more literary and urbane one.

Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England* 1500-1700 (1956), focuses primarily on the arts of rhetoric and logic as portrayed in the chief treatises of that period. Secondary emphasis is accorded the topics as part of the theory of discourse which Howell discusses, but no attempt is made to present the places as a separate tradition in the changing concepts of the arts of communication.

In *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958), Father Ong traces the development of ideas of "method" in connection with the topics. Although Father Ong treats both the dialectical and rhetorical import of the topics, he devotes most attention to the dialectical topics because of their close association with the evolution of Ramism and, eventually, of the changing concepts of logic.

None of these works explore the tradition of the places in its entirety and none of them provide anything like a definitive work on the places. It is the purpose of this study, then, to explore the commonplace tradition directly as a whole and to present an exposition of the places as interpreted in certain educational and literary works of the Renaissance. The plan to be followed will provide a progressive development of the commonplace from its origins in Greek oratory to the Renaissance. A basic concept of the commonplace, as a kind of working definition, has already been established as a norm to follow through the historical survey of the concept through the Greek, Latin, medieval, and Renaissance periods. The Renais-

sance theory of the commonplace will be investigated with respect to the dialectical and rhetorical topics, and an attempt will be made to describe the confused and varied ideas which existed in most of the treatises on the places produced by Renaissance rhetoricians. The practical application of the commonplace theories will be demonstrated in various educational and literary works and in the ethical ideal which resulted from the commonplace with its virtue and vice tradition. Finally, the summary will present a parallel picture of the classical and Renaissance traditions with their similarities and diversities. The authors to be treated will include the more important men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries whose treatises on rhetoric and/or dialectic are well known. A large proportion of the source material has been taken directly from Latin works because these works have provided ideas and theories about the commonplaces relatively new in the tradition.

I

Commonplaces

in Historical Perspective

The history of the commonplace tradition as it is surveyed in the classical and medieval periods will be discussed with respect to the theory and use of the dialectical and rhetorical topics. In order to furnish some basis for the discussion of these topics, Aristotle's conception of the dialectical and rhetorical places will be used as a kind of comparative norm. In his division of the topics as "common" and "special," Aristotle places those arguments which were used by all men and by all sciences under "common," and those topics which were peculiar to a particular class of things under "special." These universal forms of argument, the "common" topics, belonged to both dialectic and rhetoric. In other words, dialectic and rhetoric would make use of the same kind of arguments since neither of them was concerned with scientific demonstrations or "special" topics. Both of these arts used arguments, and both of them dealt with probabilities; hence, dialectical and rhetorical arguments must, according to Aristotle, be drawn from what is usually true, that

is, from probabilities or from opinions generally accepted. Aristotle assigns *induction* and *syllogism* as methods of proof in dialectic and *example* and *enthymeme* as proofs in rhetoric. Even in the proofs to be used there is a similarity or relationship between dialectic and rhetoric because Aristotle thought of the example as a kind of induction and the enthymeme as an apparent syllogism. He classifies these two, along with the four general commonplaces, as arguments or topics common to all oratory.

Aristotle suggests, then, that within definite areas the two arts of dialectic and rhetoric have a similarity of method and function. He likewise points out the differences that exist between them. Dialectic is concerned with disputes upon alternative beliefs, with the discernment of truth from falsehood, and with intellectual conviction. It surveys scientific and learned questions. Rhetoric is concerned with practical questions of policy, with producing conviction in a real audience, and with emotional effectiveness. Aristotle implies that dialectical invention does not consider the emotions of the audience or the moral character of the orator, both of which are emphasized in rhetorical invention. The average man does not always act as a consequence of his belief; he is willing to behave in the right way if his emotions and moral sentiments are aroused. Rhetoric seems to have exclusive jurisdiction in respect to the invention of moral and emotional inducements to action. Dialectic and rhetoric have their similarities and their differences, and they meet at the point where the orator is forced to employ logical means of persuasion.

In the exploration of the commonplaces and their tradition in the classical and Middle Ages which this chapter makes, the rhetorical places will claim more attention than the dialectical. Historically, the places are of more mo-

ment in rhetoric because classical culture was dominantly an oratorical culture which came to stress the ceremonial oration more than the forensic. Persuasion, the aim of rhetoric, looked to the political and ethical ideals for moving the audience more than to the dialectical arguments for convincing a judge. As a result, the rhetorical places gradually moved farther and farther away from the dialectical until they became more concerned with style than with argumentation. Not until the eleventh century did the dialectical places begin to resume the place of prominence they had had in Aristotelian philosophy. With this introductory background of the dialectical and rhetorical places as something of a guiding norm, the commonplaces can now be discussed in their historical perspective.

1. GREEK EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

According to John of Salisbury, Parmenides was the first to devise the places which would function as auxiliaries in settling logical disputes. However, to those who have access to more historical sources than John of Salisbury did, the places seem rather to spring from the Sophists who flourished in the second half of the fifth century in Greece. These men, with Protagoras as leader, were thought to be the first to teach the art of dialectic which for them meant the possibility of arguing both for and against any proposition. This new science of dialectic when rightly pursued had the power of disturbing the settled habits of thought and stimulated fresh inquiry into the problem of the highest import to mankind. Protagoras's chief accomplishment was his impressive declamation on moral and political themes. Marrou notes that, although this system was "cynically pragmatist and prac-

tically effective," it had tremendous effect on later Greek history and that the whole of Greek philosophy, science, and culture with its dominance of dialectics can be traced back to Protagoras and his teaching.[1]

The Sophists added to their educational training another subject, rhetoric, whose whole concern, as that of dialectic, was for practical effectiveness. But, whereas dialectic tended to be concerned with speculative argumentation, rhetoric was concerned with practical matters, with moving a real audience to action. Gorgias, one of the Sophists, is credited with perfecting rhetoric and giving to it method, principles, and set forms, although Empedocles, his teacher, seems to have been the originator of it. In this rhetorical art of the Sophists is found the model upon which the future schools of rhetoric in Greece and Rome would be built. The master prepared a model and gave it to his pupils to copy; the sample might be a poetical, moral, or political theme. The pupils not only committed these speeches to memory and delivered them, but they also put them into writing so they could study them later and use them as examples in composing their own orations. But mastering a form was only a part of rhetoric. An effective speech must have what we today would call content, arguments, and ideas for expanding the subject. Consequently, there was a branch of rhetoric devoted to invention which directed the pupil as to where and how to discover ideas.

This invention gave rise to the commonplaces or topics which enabled one to analyze everything and anything because they were of universal concern and treated of such concepts as justice and injustice, nature and convention, and the like. These were the famous "commonplaces"

1. From *A History of Education in Antiquity* by H. I. Marrou, © 1956, Sheed & Ward, Inc., New York, pp. 50 ff.

whose existence and fecundity the Sophists discovered. Thus these Greek masters were able to formulate whole masses of ingenious rules and methods for locating every possible topic on any given case. A number of standard passages were composed which could be applied to different circumstances, for instance, on how to flatter a judge, how to criticize evidence obtained by witnesses, by torture, or other external means. In this way Antiphon composed a collection of exordia suitable for any occasion. From these commonplaces, ancient education and, eventually, the whole of classical literature derived in great part their permanent attraction for "general ideas," for those great moral themes of eternal significance which, for good and for ill, form one of the most characteristic features of ancient culture.[2]

The purpose of Sophistic education was to educate the "man of politics" and from the very beginning it fostered this pragmatical and practical aim. The Sophists' oratory thus tended to become formal and superficial and it became more a "proof for proof's sake" than any logical demonstration of truth. As long as an argument was effective, it was brought into the speech. It remained for Isocrates to give depth and moral status to this rhetoric.

Isocrates is the supreme master of oratorical culture, the literary kind of education which was to become the dominant feature of classical learning. He lived in an age when there was grave necessity for new political and ethical ideals if Greece was to be saved. He did not believe, like Plato, that the sorely needed reformation could be achieved by the creation of a new moral world, a state, as it were, within each man's soul. For him the new elements in the spiritual renaissance were to crystallize

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-56.

around the idea of Greece as a nation. According to Isocrates, then, rhetoric, not Platonic philosophy, was the intellectual form which would best express the political and ethical ideas of his age. This new rhetoric would be a mean between the moral indifference which had characterized the Sophist rhetoric and the Platonic resolve to merge all politics into morality. By giving to this rhetoric the highest things as its content, he would make this art the one true culture, the *paideia,* so to speak, leading to that universal standard of perfection which he desired for Greek intellectual life.[3]

Isocrates began his reformation with the commonplaces which he employed for "the gradual amplification of a subject in the direction of what is universal, towards general ideas, great and noble feelings; a tendency which in the end wreaked havoc on the language by helping to produce all those empty commonplaces which have disfigured so many of the works produced by classical academicism." [4] For Isocrates the primary interest was the humanistic development of man, both morally and culturally. The training demanded for achieving this humanistic aim was to be an oratorical one because Isocrates firmly believed that moral values were intimately joined with rhetorical invention and judgment. The orator's personality was embodied in his speeches, and the personal authority which was conferred upon his words by a virtuous life gave the oration more weight than it would have had otherwise. Thus rhetoric was gradually transformed into ethics. In all phases of education there existed the preoccupation with the moral virtues and the

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3. Werner William Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture,* translated from German manuscript by Gilbert Highet, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), III, 50 ff.

4. Marrou, *op. cit.,* pp. 88-89.

pupil was trained to become not only a man of letters, an artist, or scientist, but also to conform his life to some ethical standard.[5]

Another rhetorician, and a contemporary of Aristotle, was Aphthonius. He thought of the *locus communis* (commonplace) as an oration which amplified good or evil, or, as Richard Rainolde translates it,

> A Common place is a Oracion, dilatyng and amplifyng good or evill, whiche is incidente or lodged in any man. This Oracion is called a common place, because the matter conteined in it, doeth agree uniuersally to all menne, whiche are partakers of it, and giltie of the same.[6]

Further explanation defines this exercise as a kind of last argument or epilogue in a speech without exordium or beginning and as a part of rhetoric "large to intreate upon, for the aboundaunce of matter." It would serve the arguments of both the accuser and the defender. Although Aphthonius thought of the commonplace as an oration rather than as a "place" where one found arguments, in developing this speech which amplified good or evil, he "visited" the commonplaces of invention regularly used in proving a case—contrary, exposition, comparison, digression, exclusion of pity. Thus his oration or commonplace embodied a commonplace topic, good or evil, and was amplified by other commonplace arguments. It had a definite location in the larger oration as a "laste argument or *Epilogus*." Aphthonius in his book of themes for rhetorical exercises arranged his material in a manner

5. Isocrates, *Antidosis,* trans. George Norlin (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), II, 273-80.

6. Richard Rainolde, *The Foundacion of Rhetorike,* introd. Francis R. Johnson (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1945), fol. xxxiij r.

similar to the popular Renaissance commonplace books or copybooks; the topics or minor forms were fourteen, each one was named, defined, analyzed, and illustrated in an oration which made use of the places of the subtopics peculiar to that particular subject. This book or *Progymnasmata* was regularly used by the schools of the Renaissance and the concept of the commonplace as Aphthonius explained it was well known to every schoolboy.

Any mention of the "places" in a work of rhetoric or logic immediately brings to mind Aristotle's well-known definition of the *topoi* as "seats of arguments." Aristotle thought of the *topoi* as constituting psychological areas or locales in which arguments were grouped according to their kinds and from which they could be drawn. However, even a cursory survey of the discussion of the "places" in his *Rhetoric* will reveal that, as this work has come down to us, there was in reality no single principle for their selection. The "common" and "special" topics overlap and are used interchangeably for either general or particular cases. General headings are divided and subdivided into other topics until there develops a maze of places so loosely connected that any kind of specific classification is impossible. This confusion of the places is not peculiar to Aristotle alone. Other rhetoricians who have attempted to treat this subject find the same difficulty. Father Ong suggests this in his work on Ramus when he explains Peter of Spain's treatise "On Places" *(De locis):*

> "On Places" *(De Locis)* is the usual loose agglomerate of topics or headings. No single principle for selection of "places" is discernible. Like other assortments (those of the early Greek Sophists, Aristotle, Themistius, Boethius, and later, Rudolph Agricola and Ramus), Peter's is an imaginative stimulus and recall device suggesting some-

thing to say for speakers who have to develop a subject or "topic." [7]

The places in which the universal forms of arguments were found Aristotle called "common." However, as he states later, there were only four commonplaces: possible and impossible, more and less, past fact and future fact, and magnification and minimization. These were common to all kinds of oratory—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. When Aristotle discusses these commonplaces in his *Rhetoric,* he points out that they are not peculiar to a particular field of investigation but to a general or common subject. He is careful to make a distinction between the common and special topic:

> I mean that the proper subjects of dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms are the things with which we say the regular or universal Lines of Argument are concerned, that is to say those lines of argument that apply equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many other things that have nothing to do with another. Take, for instance, the line of argument concerned with "the more or less." On this line of argument it is equally easy to base a syllogism or enthymeme about any of what nevertheless are essentially disconnected subjects. . . . But there are also those special Lines of Argument which are based on such propositions as apply only to particular groups or classes of things. Thus there are propositions about natural science on which it is impossible to base any enthymeme or syllogism about ethics, and other propositions about ethics on which nothing can be based about natural science. . . . By special Lines of Argument I mean the propositions peculiar to each several class of things, by general those common to all classes alike.[8]

7. Ong, *op. cit.,* p. 63.
8. Aristotle *Rhetorica* i. 2. 1358 [a].

Thus the commonplaces, which Aristotle regarded as the proper subjects of dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms, are the regular or universal lines of arguments applying to all classes of subjects.

When discussing the general and particular kind of arguments, Aristotle suggests, at least implicitly, that he thought of the commonplace also as a little speech. In referring to the need of using as many facts as possible, he says:

> . . . for the more actual facts we have at our command, the more easily we prove our case; and the more closely they bear on the subject, the more they will seem to belong to that speech only instead of being commonplaces. By "commonplaces" I mean, for example, eulogy of Achilles because he is a human being or a demi-god, or because he joined the expedition against Troy: these things are true of many others, so that this kind of eulogy applies no better to Achilles than to Diomede. The special facts here needed are those that are true of Achilles alone; such facts as that he slew Hector, the bravest of the Trojans, and Cycnus the invulnerable, who prevented all the Greeks from landing, . . .[9]

This passage seems to indicate that Aristotle, like Aphthonius, thought of an oration or part of an oration which had been amplified by one or more of the topics as itself a commonplace. It also shows the connection between the two ideas of the commonplaces—on the one hand, the arguments which express universal relationships, such as praise or blame, as opposed to those special topics which deal with the particular, and, on the other hand, miniature speeches inserted in larger orations, such as the eulogy of Achilles.

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9. *Ibid.* ii. 22. 1396 ᵇ.

Theon, another of the Greek rhetoricians, who lived in the second century, considered the commonplace as an *oratio* by which a deed upon which the case rests is increased either by praise or blame. For him, like Aphthonius, the commonplace was thought of as a school exercise which treated a common and universal subject. It was juridical in its nature and was to be used in a case pleaded in the court with the judges as auditors. The end of this oration was to persuade the judge and to exact punishment. Theon described this theme as a powerful speech which amplified, moved, and became effective by the use of maxims.[10]

Another formulary of thematic places similar to those of Theon and Aphthonius was that of Hermogenes, who was considered the most famous technical writer on rhetoric in the second century of the Christian era. His categories were quoted by all the rhetoricians who succeeded him and as late as the sixteenth century his exercise book was a common text in the grammar schools.[11] Hermogenes defined the commonplace as

> the amplification of a thing admitted, of demonstrations already made. For in this we are no longer investigating whether so-and-so was a robber of temples, whether such-another was a chieftain, but how we shall amplify the demonstrated fact. It is called commonplace because it is applicable to every temple robber and to every chieftain. The procedure must be as follows: analysis of the contrary, the deed itself, comparison, proverb, defamatory surmise of the past life (of the accused) from the present,

10. Theon, *Theonis sophistae primae apud rhetorem exercitationes, innumeris quibus scatebant antea mendis Ioachimi Camerarii . . .* (Basileae, 1541), pp. 314-15.

11. Charles S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), p. 23, quoting from the Teubner text of Rabe (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 1-27.

repudiation of pity by the so-called final considerations and by a sketch of the deed itself.[12]

Censure and encomium were classified with the commonplace because both were developed by the same places (those mentioned above). Hermogenes defined encomium as "setting forth the good qualities that belong to some one in general or in particular." It differed from the commonplace in the issue or end—the aim of the commonplace was to receive a reward, that of encomium to witness virtue.[13]

The commonplace (in this sense of an oratorical amplification) assumed the facts of the case to be true, and its duty was to prepare the way for the approval or disapproval of the judge, whether he was in the court, on the political rostrum, or auditing a ceremonial speech. Although the topics were such that they could be used interchangeably in rhetoric or dialectic, their natural habitat was in the field of persuasion rather than of technical proof. With Aphthonius, Theon, and Hermogenes these "places" maintained their pedagogical position simply as exercises by which schoolboys could be trained to become outstanding orators in any field—political, legal, or moral. As long as invention remained *the* important part of rhetoric, the places would continue to hold prestige in that art.

In concluding this survey of the commonplaces in their Greek origins, we can sum up the prevalent ways of conceiving of them by saying that they originated primarily within a school setting, that they concerned general and universal ideas, that these universal ideas or "arguments" were amplified and used as a kind of

12. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

"speech-within-a-speech" in order to move the emotions of the audience, and that their ordinary theme was moral, either praising virtue or blaming vice.

2. ROMAN ORATORY

In the rhetorical training of the Romans, especially under the influence of Cicero and Quintilian, there was explicit emphasis on the traditional five-part division of rhetoric which dated from the ancient Greeks: invention, disposition, elocution, pronunciation, and memory. In the Greek tradition these five parts of rhetoric indicated the structure of education—the exercise of invention aided in acquiring a general knowledge, memory was developed, and a pleasing literary style and oral delivery was taught. So in the Roman world, a boy was actively exercised in these arts until he attained the skill of the well-trained orator grounded in a liberal knowledge of all the arts.

Invention was always the most important of the divisions of rhetoric and its indispensable handmaid was the places. Cicero follows Aristotle in his definition of a place as a "seat of arguments," a kind of psychological locale or storehouse for ideas. In the dialogue with his son, Marcus Tullius Junior, Cicero, answering the question, "What do you mean by topics?" replied, "Those places in which arguments are stored." [14] In explaining this line of argument, he continues:

> But when the line of discussion is decided upon, the speaker must have before him a point of reference to which to refer all the lines of argument obtained from the topics of invention. . . . This is enough for one who

14. Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), 2. 5.

> sees the hidden content of each topic and who has the topics in question neatly labelled like storehouses of arguments.[15]

Cicero defines a common topic as containing "either an amplification of an undisputed statement, for example, if one would wish to show that a man who has murdered his father or mother deserves the extreme penalty, or of a doubtful statement against which there are also plausible lines of argument." [16]

A distinction is made by Cicero between the kinds of common topics and when they should be used:

> Common topics fit the issue of fact; one should and should not put confidence in suspicions, in rumours, in witnesses, in examinations under torture; one should and should not take into consideration a man's past life; . . . These and many other similar common topics which may spring out of an argument peculiar to the case in hand, and applicable to both sides.
>
> There is, however, a common topic belonging to the prosecutor alone, in which he makes much of the atrocity of the crime. . . . These and other common topics are subject to the same rules as are other arguments. But the others are treated with greater restraint, simplicity, and acumen, while the common topics are developed with greater emphasis and embellishment, and with lofty language and thought. For in arguments the end is to give what is said the appearance of truth; in common topics, although this should also be an object, still the chief end is amplification.[17]

This explanation of the kinds of common topics hints somewhat at Aristotle's division of common and special

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15. *Ibid.* 31. 109.
16. Cicero *De inventione* 15. 48.
17. *Ibid.* 15. 50-51.

topics with their application to general and particular cases respectively. Cicero stresses again the purpose of the commonplace to embellish with lofty language and to amplify the argument.

Cicero does not explicitly state that a commonplace is a little speech inserted in an oration but he does give evidence that this idea haunts him in his discussion of a common topic as one which "contains an amplification of an undisputed statement . . . as well as amplifications of cases of doubtful statements." [18]

Quintilian's treatment of the commonplace is not as elaborate as that of Aristotle or Cicero but he does give a rather clear perception of his concept of its nature and use. He calls it a "thesis or passage dealing with some general principle or theme." [19] That he followed Aristotle's notion is evident when he discusses the value of the places and admits that the knowledge of them is not useless but may, in fact, prevent those who have learned the rules from neglecting other considerations and may encourage them to regard themselves as having a perfect and absolute knowledge of the whole subject. Unless the orator acquire a thorough knowledge of the entire field, he will be the possessor of a "dumb science." [20]

Quintilian seemed to be of the opinion, like his predecessors, that the commonplace had a double function, and that a common topic had both a general and a particular application:

> But I do not use this term in its usual acceptance, namely, commonplaces directed against luxury, adultery, and the like, but in the sense of the secret places where arguments

18. *Ibid.* 15. 48.
19. Quintilian *Inst.* ii. 1. 9.
20. *Ibid.* v. 10. 117-119.

> reside, and from which they must be drawn forth. For just as all kinds of produce are not provided by every country, and as you will not succeed in finding a particular bird or beast, if you are ignorant of the localities where it has its usual haunts or birthplaces, . . . so not every kind of argument can be derived from every circumstance, and consequently our search requires discrimination.[21]

Here is a distinction between the place as common to all circumstances and as peculiar to an individual case—an echo of the common and special topics of Aristotle and Cicero.

In the second book of the *Institutio oratoria,* reference is made to the *locus communis* as an *oratio:*

> Commonplaces—I speak of those in which, without specifying persons, it is usual to declaim against the vices themselves, as against adultery, gambling, etc.—are of the very nature of speeches at trials.[22]

Quintilian strengthened this latter concept of courtroom speeches in his disapproval of those who wrote out and memorized commonplaces beforehand. He calls such passages artificial ornaments tacked onto a speech, not interwoven in its texture. "Such speakers," he said, "introduce the most long-winded commonplaces just for the sake of sentiment that they contain, whereas rightly the sentiments should spring from the context." [23]

The influence of Aristotle is noticeable in the explanations of the *locus communis* given by the Roman writers. However, a new element is added, or at least more greatly emphasized, by Cicero and Quintilian, and that is the

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21. *Ibid.* v. 10. 19-23.
22. *Ibid.* ii. 4. 22.
23. *Ibid.* ii. 4. 31.

more immediate concern for stylistic embellishment of the commonplace. This increased interest in style is due, perhaps, to the growing importance of the ceremonial oration in the Roman republic as contrasted with the more definite legal usage of the commonplace in the judicial orations in Greece.

3. SECOND SOPHISTS AND MEDIEVAL RENAISSANCE

The transition period from the Graeco-Roman world to that of the Christian era includes approximately the second, third, and fourth centuries of the late Roman Empire. Within this span of years the literary historian can observe the steady flow of a traditional rhetorical education which had its source in the early Sophist schools of Greece and Rome and whose waters still ebb and flow in contemporary literature. From Isocrates to Aristotle, from Cicero to Quintilian, the pattern of Greek and Roman education was the same—grammar, literature, rhetoric; and the primary aim was the training of the perfect orator. The sequence could be followed from Augustine to Cassiodorus, from Alcuin to John of Salisbury, and from Chaucer to Shakespeare. All of these men, each important in his own age, had been trained in the schools of the rhetor and were constantly exploiting the manuals for arguments, models, and stylistic effects for their own creative productions, whether oral or written.

The ancient schools maintained two divergent views of rhetoric which can be distinguished in terms of their attention to "form" and "matter." The Sophists were preoccupied with giving effectiveness to the speaker, not with conveying a message, and, as a result, they taught an art characterized by elaborate display and empty forms. Rhetoric as conceived by Plato and Aristotle was more

involved with "matter": it was a part of moral philosophy and was concerned with the energizing of knowledge and the bringing of truth to bear upon men. The intellectual content of the message, not the speaker, was significant, and the method of procedure was proof and refutation and a whole line of logical argument. Cicero, Quintilian, and the author of the *Ad Herennium* enrolled in the school of Aristotle yet maintained a certain measure of independence in the question of style. Even though their theory was logical, these Romans could not be fully absolved from the Sophists' inordinate attachment to style, although it never became for them the besetting sin that it was for their ancestors. From Augustine to Shakespeare the same bifocal relationship existed in rhetoric so that in one age precedence was given to the more concise dialectical view of the Greeks and Romans, and, in another, to the more stylistic outlook of the Sophists. The purpose of rhetorical argument, to persuade to action, was common to both groups.

Whatever the status of rhetoric, the topics or commonplaces were always at hand to provide directives along the way for use in argumentation, amplification, or embellishment. The topics were the seats of arguments which contained key ideas of universal application and the sources of countless moral dicta destined to influence the character and mold the opinion of an audience. They contained the figures and tropes which adorned and beautified the language. The dialectical topics were present, too, in somewhat of an eclipsed condition. They assisted in exploiting material or "topics" for debate on either side of an issue, but, in reality, they provided little more than an imaginative stimulus and recall device suggesting something to say for speakers who had to develop a subject or "topic."

Since the commonplaces are so closely associated with

the arts of discourse, rhetoric and dialectic, a survey of their theory and practice in the Middle Ages will have to be made in the light of the changing concept of these two arts as it existed in that period.

The Second Sophistic period.—The age between Quintilian and Augustine which marks the transition from the ancient to the modern world has often been titled the "Second Sophistic," a term which relates the type of education prevalent at that time to that of the "First Sophistic" seven centuries previous. During the first three hundred years of the Christian era the schools were still following the Roman system of elementary and higher education with its *litterator, grammaticus,* and *rhetor.* All training was still directed to producing the perfect orator who, in theory, would be the completely educated man, but who, in practice, became absorbed in developing minutiae of style. The rhetor stressed an intensive application to the prose writers *(auctores)* as a necessary preparation for the elaborate spoken and written exercises of different types, particularly the *suasoriae* and the *controversiae.* Techniques of imitation were taught as well as the habit of reading with notebook in hand to collect telling words and phrases, metaphors, parts of speech, and arguments. This material was memorized and practiced until it became a part of the furniture of the student's mind. By the second century, language had become systematized and dictionaries and grammars became popular as instruments in imitation.

The narrowing of public discussion and its consequent abandonment by the orator of the courtroom and the political platform left room only for the occasional oratory which excelled in the panegyric and the encomium. The theoretical training in rhetoric went on as before but, lacking contemporary experience, it became conventional,

an oratory of themes lacking content and stressing virtuosity, memory, and improvisation. The relation between literature and life had ceased and literature was no longer the artistic expression of a contemporary culture but rather an instrument of education. Men thought in the categories of the past, and the old lore of invention, so vital a part of ancient rhetoric, became stereotyped and barren. Arrangement was supplanted by pattern, memory became verbal, style and delivery were now the main reliance and they were elaborated into an intensely technical system.[24]

With the absence of a really thoughtful development of themes and patterns, sophistic rhetoric conformed religiously to the rules in the manuals of elementary exercises of Theon, Aphthonius, and Hermogenes. Since the eulogy was characteristic of this kind of rhetoric and since its main devices were amplification and set patterns, the commonplaces of the traditional writers were a *sine qua non* of every oration. Each part of the speech could be developed separately without regard to logical order because its place was determined beforehand in a traditional series of topics, as Baldwin points out:

> The encomium of a country was expected to deal with its situation, climate, products, its race, founders, government, its advancement in learning and literature, its festivals and its buildings, unless indeed the whole encomium were based on one of these topics. Similar topics controlled the praise of a city, a harbor, a bay, an acropolis. . . . Similarly prescribed was the encomium of a person.[25]

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24. R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge, Mass.: At the University Press, 1954), pp. 23-24.
25. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

These topics so deeply penetrated all composition that their roots remained and in later centuries invaded biography, hagiography, sermons, letter-writing, and, indeed, virtually all literary forms. The commonplace, which originally was an amplification for praising virtue and excoriating vice, was used for praising not only the virtuous man but the beauty of a country, a city, or a harbor. Rhetoric had lost its original purpose and meaning; the *topoi* acquired a new function. They became clichés which could be used in any form of literature.

St. Augustine, one of the early writers of the medieval period, attempted to restore rhetoric to its traditional Ciceronian excellence. In his *De doctrina christiana,* Augustine dismissed the corrupt Roman sophistic of personal opportunism and urged a return to the Greek ideal of moving men to truth. Dignity of thought and serious motives must replace the frivolous Roman passion for literary style, oratorical eloquence for the sake of verbal eloquence, art for the sake of art.[26] Through Augustine, rhetoric became again an instrument of discovery and disciplined inquiry and was moving towards dialectical logic. George Leckie makes this observation in the preface to his edition of Augustine's work, *Concerning the Teacher:*

> The beginning of the scholastic attention to dialectic and the gradual subordination of grammar and rhetoric to the governing ideas of dialectic may be seen in an emergent state in the writings of St. Augustine. The *De ordine*, the *De magistro,* and the *De musica* are rational seeds from

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26. Aurelius Augustine, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, On Christian Doctrine,* ed. Marcus Dodds (Edinburg: T. and T. Clark, 1873), p. xii.

> which will come to flourish the ramified tree of dialectical *Summae* which mature around the thirteenth century. And this tree is a tree of life, since the language arts are rational instruments promoting the health of the mind.[27]

Augustine did not discard eloquence but he demanded wisdom as its guide so that it might move men to right living; it was only the abuse that he attacked:

> In a serious assembly no pleasure is derived from that species of eloquence which indeed says nothing that is false, but which buries small and unimportant truth under a frothy mass of ornamental words, such as would not be graceful or dignified even if used to adorn great and fundamental truths.[28]

Rejection of sophism did not mean the rejection of rhetoric. Augustine, like other early Christian writers, had been trained in the tradition of the Roman schools and he realized the necessity of this training for the preacher.

However, another problem arose, more important than that of style—the exposure, through contact with grammar and rhetoric, to pagan authors. This brought about a struggle between Christian and pagan literature which lasted for many centuries and which took one of two alternatives: to ban the classics completely or to arrive at a compromise where they could be accommodated in some way to the literature of Scriptures.

Augustine's answer to the problem was one of com-

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27. Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher and On the Immortality of the Soul,* trans. and preface George G. Leckie (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1938), pp. xviii-xix.

28. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* p. 142.

promise. He began with the topics of rhetoric which supplied the arguments, examples, and literary thesaurus for the oration. He advised the use of summaries and began the compilation of such a compendium himself, relying heavily on the Bible for his material. Such a method would enable Christian teachers to bring together the essential facts on a number of important topics and could give the young pupils screened access to information which they would otherwise need to seek directly from pagan sources. Textbooks could state the rules systematically but examples were required. Where but in the classics could such suitable texts be found? The Christian preachers would find all the rules of rhetoric illustrated in the Scriptures, and if they had a technical treatise to tell them what to look for and a Bible in which to search for examples, they would be adequately equipped. Thus Augustine set forth the principles of rhetoric which emphasized not only the traditional aspects of the art but included distinctive applications to preaching.[29]

The adaptation of rhetoric to the current literary needs would be the hallmark of the rhetoric of the future which was destined to encompass not only preaching and teaching but also the *ars dictaminis,* historical and religious biography, philosophical and theological arguments, ecclesiastical and legal controversies.

The collection of summaries which Augustine recommended was a part of his own educational training. As early as the third century grammatical treatises and other textbooks were available, commentaries appeared, and collections of moral precepts and maxims were regularly employed in the schools.

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29. Bolgar, *op. cit.,* p. 53.

One of the earliest collections of this period was the *Disticha Catonis,* a third-century compilation which consisted of ethical maxims or precepts written in hexameter couplets, which the pupil memorized and later used for topics in developing themes.[30] The use of proverbs and sententious sayings from the poets for amplification was a basic part of the training in the art of invention with which the commonplaces were so closely connected.

The grammars of Donatus and Priscian, which were written respectively in the fourth and sixth century, became authoritative texts throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance. The *Ars minor* of Donatus treated principles of elementary grammar while the companion book, *Ars maior,* was used as an advanced treatise on the same subject, on syntax, and on figures of speech. Priscian's grammar was important for its translation of the elementary exercises of Hermogenes.

Treatises on the liberal arts were not wanting either. Martianus Capella in the *Nuptials of Mercury and Philology* described allegorically the seven liberal arts in ornate style placing particular emphasis on grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. *Grammatica* is treated according to conventional terms in the exposition of poetry; *Dialectica,* to which Capella assigns six norms, two of which encroach on grammar and rhetoric, claims jurisdiction over "whatsoever the other arts utter."

Capella defines an argument, or topic, as "an oration which brings forth proof in a doubtful case." He classifies arguments as artificial and inartificial much in the manner

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30. *Disticha Catonis,* a third-century work by Pseudo-Cato Dionysius. Nothing is known for certain of the author or date of the *Disticha* assigned to third or fourth century. The book had a great reputation in the Middle Ages.

of Cicero and discusses each of the topics.[31] The recognition of the argument as an *oratio* bears some relation to the definition of the argument in the *Ad Herennium:* "The most complete and perfect argument, then, is that which is comprised of five parts, the Proposition, the Reason, the Proof of Reason, the Embellishment, and the Resume." [32] In both of these definitions there is implied the notion of the argument as a miniature speech which gives support to the proposition that commonplaces are little speeches within larger ones.

Just as Donatus and Priscian are coupled as standard names in grammar, so Boethius is allied with Aristotle and logic. His pursuit of philosophical studies resulted in a body of writings which, although not original in many cases, had a significant influence in later centuries. Boethius, who was trained in more than just the ordinary rhetorical subjects, had a knowledge and mastery of Greek, of Greek philosophy, and Neo-Platonism. He bequeathed to the medieval world the first translations of Aristotle's logical treatises, the *Categories* and *Interpretations,* and the *Isagoge* of Porphyry. He added to these his own commentaries on the *Topica* of Cicero, and his original works on *Topical Divisions* and *Differences* and on the categorical and hypothetical syllogism.

Boethius uses Cicero's definition of an argument but adds a further condition: "An argument proposes a reason which gives proof to a doubtful matter." He continues, "It has been shown what the seats of arguments are, that

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31. "Argumentum est oratio, quae rei dubiae fidem facit." Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Phililogiae et Mercurii,* ed. and notes Franciscus Eyssenhardt (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1866), v. 155G. 474 and 155G. 474—164G. 505.

32. *Ad Herennium,* trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), ii. 18. 28.

is where the arguments are hidden (these are the differences of maximum propositions) which are called places." [33] The extrinsic and intrinsic places are then discussed. The commonplaces are defined in logical terms:

> It is the intention of the topics to point out an abundance of probable arguments. It is necessary that there be an abundance of copious material for discussion in the designated places from which the probable arguments are brought forth. However, since (as we have said before) some of the probable arguments are necessary, others are not necessary, when the places of the probable arguments are discovered, it happens that those of the necessary are also learned. . . . The dialecticians and orators are helped by that place in which probable arguments are sought while that in which the probable and necessary are learned bring copiousness to the philosophical oration. By these topics both the oratorical powers and the investigation of truth will be augmented. Since a recognition of the places assists the dialecticians and the orators, likewise through a copious invention it distinguishes the oration; but because it provides the philosophers with a knowledge of the necessary places, it also to some degree lights up the road to truth.[34]

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33. "Argumentum autem ratio est quae rei dubiae faciat fidem" (col. 1048.B); "Demonstratum igitur est quae sint argumentorum sedes, id est ubi argumenta claudientur (hae sunt autem maximarum propositionum differentiae) quae vocantur loci" (col. 1054.B). Boethius, *Patrologiae latinae: Manlii Severini Boetii opera omnia, tomus posterior,* "In topica Ciceronis commentaria" (Parisiis, 1847), Lib. I.

34. "Topicorum intentio est verisimilium argumentorum copiam demonstrare. Designatis enim locis ex quibus probabilia argumenta ducuntur, abundans et copiosa necesse est fiat materia disserendi. Sed quoniam (ut supra dictum est) probabilium argumentorum alia sunt necessaria, alia non necessaria, cum loci probabilium argumentorum ducuntur, evenit ut necessariorum quoque doceantur. (Quo fit ut oratoribus quidem ac dialecticis haec principaliter facultas paretur, secundo vero loco philosophis.) Nam in quo probabilia quidem omnia conquiruntur, dialectici atque oratores juvantur; in quibus vero probabilia ac necessaria docentur, philosophiae demonstrationi ministratur ubertas . . . His enim et dicendi facultas et investigatio veritatis augetur. Nam

Boethius thus extends the devices of rhetoric to logic and makes use of the places for the discovery of arguments. Like Aristotle and Cicero, he thinks of the commonplaces as "seats of arguments," but, on the other hand, makes a more careful distinction between the dialectical and rhetorical places than they do. This distinction, found in the fourth book of *Topical Differences,* is based on three things:

Matter: Dialectic treats the thesis, a universal question, without circumstances
Rhetoric treats the hypothesis, a particular question, with circumstances
Uses: Dialectic is the method of interrogation and response with arguments in syllogisms
Rhetoric is a continuous speech with enthymemes
End: Dialectic forces what one wishes from an adversary
Rhetoric persuades a judge [35]

The five parts of ancient rhetoric are retained by Boethius and looked upon as necessary for the orator to follow in sequential order if he wishes his performance to be perfect.

Another scholar eager for intellectual conquests, the monk Cassiodorus, founded the monastery of Vivarum and established there one of the earliest communities of Christian scribes and scholars. His zeal for learning urged Cassiodorus on to the collection of manuscripts of the great literature of the past, both Greek and Latin, pagan and Christian, for copying by the scribes and to a desire for the same facilities in studying and teaching

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quod dialecticos atque oratores locorum juvat agnitio, orationi per inventionem copiam praestat; quod vero necessariorum doctrinam locorum philosophis tradit, viam quodammodo veritatis illustrat." *Ibid.,* "De differentiis topicis," Lib. II, col. 1182.

35. *Ibid.,* Lib. IV, cols. 1205-1206.

Christian literature as thoroughly as the pagan literature was studied and taught.

Cassiodorus's contribution to the liberal arts, and consequently to the places of arguments, is found in his *Introduction to Divine and Human Readings.* In the preface of the work, grammar is recognized as the source and foundation of liberal studies; rhetoric is a necessary art because of the splendor and fullness of its eloquence; dialectic is a study which separates the true from the false by means of very subtle and concise reasoning. Cassiodorus defines the topics as "the places from which arguments are derived," and classifies them according to Cicero's division of the intrinsic and extrinsic places.[36] The commonplaces are distinguished by their use:

> One should store away in his memory the fact that commonplaces furnish arguments alike to orators, dialecticians, poets, and lawyers; but when they demonstrate a particular point they have to do with orators, poets, and lawyers, and when they treat a general question they clearly concern dialecticians. Clearly a remarkable species of achievement—the fact that there could be assembled in a single place everything which the mobility and variety of the human mind has been able to discover in seeking the meaning of various situations! This achievement confines the free and voluntary intellect; for, wherever the human mind turns, whatever thoughts it considers, it refers of necessity to one of the commonplaces named above.[37]

Cassiodorus's observation on the commonplaces and their necessity in all fields of literature indicates the value

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36. Cassiodorus, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings,* trans. and introd. Leslie Webber Jones (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), pp. 172-76.

37. *Ibid.*

attributed to their use and their close integration with all intellectual activity.

Another work of even more comprehensive proportions than that of Cassiodorus was the *Etymologion* of Isidore of Seville. Of the twenty books which comprise its contents, the first three are devoted to the seven liberal arts while the remaining discuss medicine, law, the Bible, history, the celestial and terrestrial hierarchy, zoology, geography, metallurgy, crafts, and agriculture. Isidore approaches the explanation of the various arts in a linguistic manner and usually introduces each one by an etymological definition.

Rhetoric is defined in the *Etymologion* as the "art of speaking well in civil questions." It is joined with the art of grammar in which the art of speaking rightly is learned. Dialectic, a species of philosophy called logic, was invented for "discussing the causes of things, . . . being able to define, to seek and discuss the rational." [38]

The topics are listed under dialectic and follow the division which is attributed to Themistius: the intrinsic, the middle, and the extrinsic:

> *Topica* is the art of finding arguments. In the division of the Topics, or of the places from which arguments are called, there are three parts. Some adhere to the thing itself which is being pleaded; others are called effects which are obtained from things brought in; those which are taken from the exterior.[39]

38. "Dialectica est disciplina ad disserendas rerum causas inventa. Ipsa est philosophiae species, quae Logica dicitur, id est rationalis definiendi, quaerendi et disserendi potens." Isidore, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum, . . .* (Oxonii: E. typographeo Clarendoneano, 1911), Lib. II. 22.

39. "Topica est disciplina inveniendorum argumentorum. Divisio Topicorum, sive locorum ex quibus argumenta dicuntur, triplex est. Nam alia in eo ipso, de quo agitur, haerent; alia, quae dicuntur effecta, quae quodammodo ex rebus aliis tracta noscuntur; alia, quae adsumuntur extrinsecus." *Ibid.*, Lib. II. 30.

The listing of the places for the various kinds of arguments is arranged nearly verbatim according to that of Boethius.

Isidore discusses the commonplace in its relation to the demonstrative oration where a character of praise or blame is set forth:

> The demonstrative shows, whatever the subject, praise or blame. This genus has two species: praise and vituperation. The order of praise is divided into three times: *ante ipsum, in ipsum, post ipsum. . . .*
>
> The commonplace pertains to the demonstrative kind of vituperation. But yet it differs from it in some way. Vituperation, which is contrary to praise, is generally directed against a person guilty of committing a crime. The commonplace is usually set forth in the accusation of the deed. Thus it is called a commonplace because, with a person absent, it is explained not so much with regard to the man but to the deed itself. For all vice is discovered not only in one, but it is common to many.[40]

In identifying the commonplace in this way, Isidore places it in the conventional moral setting, the amplification of praise or blame. The contrast between the commonplace, directed against a deed, and the vituperation, directed against a person, brings out a somewhat different aspect of the commonplace—it is thought of as universal because

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40. "Demonstrativum dictum, quod unamquamque rem aut laudando aut vituperando demonstrat. Quod genus duas habet species: laudem et vituperationem. Laudis ordo tribus temporibus distinguitur: ante ipsum, in ipsum post ipsum. . . . Locus communis ad demonstrativum vituperationis genus pertinet. Quod tamen ab eo in aliquo differt. Nam vituperatio, quae contraria est laudis, specialiter in certam facientis personam adhibetur. Communis vero locus generaliter in facti crimen prae ponitur. Unde et communis locus dicitur, quia absente persona non tam in hominem, quantum in ipsum crimen exponitur. Omne enim vitium non in uno tantum, sed etiam commune in plurimis invenitur." *Ibid.*, Lib. II. 4.

it is impersonal, that is, it is explained "not so much with regard to the man but to the deed itself."

While an Augustine, a Boethius, or an Isidore was pioneering in a Christian rhetoric, the sophistic art was tenaciously clinging to life in the schools of Gaul, as Baldwin notes:

> In the ancient province a cultivated leisure class, living in the twilight of a great past outworn and doomed, cherished the sophistic conception of elegance and the sophistic habit of education by rhetoric as symbols of their Romanism; . . . their writers and teachers would not risk being thought less literary than the capital of the world.[41]

In general, the literary tradition of these schools was that of the *declamatores* who had high regard for usage, for exhibition of literary allusions, and command of the technique of style. The same love of virtuosity in declaiming, of set patterns or themes, and of skill in dilation which so obsessed the sophistics of the earlier age had an equal fascination for the rhetors of the fifth and sixth centuries in Gaul. In such a rhetorical setting, the topics were no longer seats of *arguments* but rather a series of themes to be followed in the expansion of any subject.

Two typical declaimers of the Sophist schools were Ausonius, *grammaticus* and *rhetor* at Bordeaux, and the Christian bishop Sidonius Apollinaris. Baldwin describes Ausonius as having the facile ability of turning a stanza on anything because of his grammar-school knowledge of metrics. Ausonius clung to the use of the topics commonly found in the making of Latin verse in the schools, since

41. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

these topics came in series—the order of the daily round, the twelve Caesars, the seven sages, and so on.[42] Such an interpretation of the use of the topics shows how far these medieval sophists have deviated from Aristotle's definition of the *topoi* as seats of arguments. The topics are little more than "thought markers" in the process of an oration, empty of any real content and conventional in form. Sidonius is better known and his works are more numerous and more lasting than those of Ausonius. However, he, too, was caught in the web of declamation so that whatever he wrote—panegyrics, addresses of welcome, commemorations, or letters—all followed the same stylistic pattern, and all were confined by the boundaries of imitation. An example from one of his works demonstrating the amplification of a topic by "contrast" points up the lack of originality in such writing:

> He responds as Pythagoras, discriminates as Socrates; evolves as Plato, involves as Aristotle; as Aeschines soothes, as Demosthenes provokes; as Hortensius is in spring, as Cethegus in summer; hurries as Curio, lingers as Fabius; [43]

Collections of *declamationes* were regularly sought as storehouses for use in imitation. The *controversiae,* a particular kind of topic used in orations which these collections contained, were from the common stock, as that of the adulterer or the traitor, and they were used to teach boys how to develop an outline by use of commonplaces for dilation. These "places" provided pieces or little speeches which the boys could weave into their themes until they were sufficiently amplified. These col-

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42. *Ibid.,* p. 76.
43. Sidonius *Epistles* iv. 3. 6, quoted in Baldwin, *op. cit.,* p. 81.

lections of "set speeches" were only one kind of the many commentaries, texts, and summaries with which the boys were supplied and in which they might note down and retain for future use examples, quotations, themes, epigrams, moral dicta, and, in short, anything that might aid them in dilating and adorning their themes.

The trivium in the early medieval schools.—After the barbarian invasions, the centers of learning were established in the northern countries of Europe. Ireland, England, and France were to be the custodians of the classical inheritance which had survived the sophist schools of the Roman Empire. The monasteries of Ireland were the first to receive this patrimony which, in turn, passed into the hands of the Anglo-Saxon people who would preserve it for future generations.

Since this new culture was transmitted in the Latin language, a need arose for the establishment of schools where this Latin tongue, so strangely foreign to the Celts, the English, and the Franks, might be learned. The missionaries who had been sent into Britain became the first educators and they set up monastery schools where Latin could be taught and learned.

The curriculum in these schools included the general study of the liberal arts and training in the precepts of the religious life. Grammar was of prime importance among the subjects and was taught according to the traditional methods of Roman pedagogy as found in the standard works of Priscian, Donatus, and Cassiodorus. The study of dialectic and rhetoric did not differ much from that of the preceding centuries. The former followed the works of Boethius as preserved principally in the *Etymologion* of Isidore while the latter, though in theory Ciceronian via Cassiodorus, followed the counsels of style and the *declamatio* of the sophistic rhetors. After the

subjects of the trivium had been mastered, philosophy was to be taken up with its quadrivium of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy, and, finally, Holy Writ was added to the studies.

The first extended treatment of the topics or places in this period is found in Alcuin's *Rhetoric.* The sources for this work are primarily from Cicero's *De inventione* with traces of Julius Victor, Cassiodorus, and Isidore. Invention is the main theme of the *Rhetoric* as it generally was in Latin writings on rhetoric. The topics are discussed as places of invention or seats of arguments much in the manner of Cicero's intrinsic and extrinsic places. Howell, in his introduction to *The Rhetoric of Alcuin and Charlemagne,* notes that Alcuin differs from Cicero in his failure to discuss the moral virtues as related to rhetorical invention and persuasive discourse.[44]

Among the important products of monastic industry which played an important role in the history of medieval rhetoric were the chrestomathies or source books of invention. These collections contained extracts from various types of literary works and their contents might be didactic, recreation, or a combination of the two written in prose or verse. One such collection, from a ninth-century manuscript of St. Gall, has the *Ars minor* of Donatus, the *De rhetorica* of Alcuin, some Virgilian and Leonine verses, the second book of Cassiodorus's *Institutiones,* a section on miracles from Gregory of Tours' astronomical tract, and Isidore's *De natura rerum.* Such a selection evinces a sincere attempt, if not a very effective one, to locate universal learning in one volume. In addition to these chrestomathies there were other collections of

44. Alcuin, *The Rhetoric of Alcuin and Charlemagne,* trans. and introd. Wilbur Samuel Howell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 31-32.

encyclopedic vastness. Dictionaries and glossaries of every description and variety—biblical, patristic, dialectical, grammatical, and topical—were as numerous as anthologies. These books were the seeds of the commonplace books which would flourish so abundantly in the Renaissance.[45] Although they were not important as literature, they did provide the medieval student with an abundance of classical lore in the form of quotations, fables, proverbs, and the like, which enriched his themes and multiplied his sources of commonplaces.[46] Such anthologies because of their *copia verborum* make the Carolingian scholar appear very impressively learned in classical lore unless one remembers that often there was more the appearance than the reality of such learning.

The medieval renaissance.—Within the next three or four centuries numerous changes occurred which affected nearly every important field of human endeavor. Specialist groups in law, medicine, and theology, the three specialized professional foci of medieval thought, were the most significant developments, and the future history of rhetoric and dialectic together with that of the topics would be determined by the demands of these sciences.

Rhetoric, dialectic, and logic varied in importance according to the demands of intellectual progress. The Carolingian Age had domesticated Latin grammar and established a place in the school for the *Ad Herennium* and the *De inventione*. Rhetoric because of its intimate association with discourse was a perennial subject always

45. The recent study made by Starnes and Talbert presents evidence which indicates the prevalence of this practice of using dictionaries for classical allusions. De Witt T. Starnes and Ernest W. Talbert, *Classical Myth and Legend in Renaissance Dictionaries* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955).

46. M. L. W. Laistner, *Thoughts and Letters in Western Europe, A.D. 500-900* (London: Methuen and Co., 1957), pp. 176 ff.

in demand but always subject to change in matter, form, and function according to contemporary urgency. Dialectic slowly worked its way into prominence in the trivium beginning with the works of Augustine, Capella, and Isidore. Later, Alcuin and Boethius added a vivifying touch, and from the end of the tenth century, when the first part of Aristotle's *Organon* appeared, the study of logical argument held fast the attention of men until by the twelfth century the art of dialectic had become an independent discipline with specific problems and specific techniques.

To mark the path of the commonplaces in this maze of growth and change and abundant literary production is to follow the course of rhetoric and dialectic in the developing tension between the oral and written word. The two typical medieval fields for the ancient lore of persuasion were *dictamen* and preaching, the one written, the other oral, and both stressed style. The manuals of the *ars poetica* contained topics for dilating and enhancing language. In theological and ecclesiastical controversies the places were used for discovering logical arguments and securing intellectual conviction.

The consignment of rhetoric to the function of adorning and dilating took from it something of its former vitality in the intellectual processes of composition. Logic became the subject which challenged men's minds and consequently the art of invention and the discovery of arguments were attributed primarily to logic in the trivium. At Chartres, the center of learning in the twelfth century, John of Salisbury focuses his *Metalogicon,* one of the most extensive medieval surveys of the arts, on logic.

In Book Three of his work, John discusses and comments on the *Categories* and *Topics* of Aristotle. The *Categories,* according to John, are elementary and treat

of uncombined words (predicaments) and their significance while the *Topics* contain the places for building up the power of invention and assisting in judgment. Each of the eight books of the *Topics* is discussed as to its subject matter and then supplemented with examples. The topics include such "places" as property, accident, genus, species, definitions, identity and diversity, and the relative value of things.[47] At the conclusion of the seventh book is an explanation of the commonplaces:

> Because of the abundance of commonplaces (from which arguments may be drawn) that are therein contained, it is very properly said that the sum of the *Topics* is found in the seven volumes we have just discussed. They have been, as Isidore says, entitled *Topics* because they contain *topoi,* that is "commonplaces," which are foundations of arguments, fountainheads of meanings, and sources of expression. The branch of study itself is also called *Topics* because it deals with these commonplaces. One who carefully studies this work of Aristotle will discover that from these seven volumes have come, not only the *Topics* of Cicero and Boethius, but also Boethius's book of *Divisions.*[48]

This commentary which John makes in referring to the topics as the foundations of arguments and sources of meanings and expressions reveals something of an all-inclusive attitude towards the commonplaces as logical patterns of thought directing oral and written discourse. Likewise, it destroys any notion of a neat division of the *topoi* of Aristotle into four major commonplaces with specific subdivisions.

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47. John of Salisbury. *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury,* trans. introd. and comm. Daniel D. McGarry (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), pp. 669-70.

48. *Ibid.,* p. 161.

The customary devices which were formerly associated with rhetoric, generally or in some cases exclusively —invention, judgment, and eloquence in speaking—have their source in logical studies and argumentation and are embodied by John in his *dialectica.* Whatever was found useful in rhetoric was placed with grammar. Thus the trivium was limited to two subjects, logic and grammar. Such an arrangement corresponds with the definition of logic as given in the *Metalogicon* as a science which includes all the arts relative to words from their mental conception to their oral and written expression.

Other medieval surveys of the arts, from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, follow rather consistently the same theory of rhetoric and the places as John of Salisbury did. Alain de Lille, Vincent of Beauvais, and Bonaventure describe the topics in relation to dialectic or logic and assign rhetoric to the stylistic adornment of logic.[49]

Theoretically, then, the commonplaces of medieval rhetoric and dialectic were categorized according to the traditional definitions and divisions of the ancient Greek and Roman writers. In all the treatises of rhetoric and dialectic which were written beginning with Augustine, Boethius, and Isidore and extending to John of Salisbury, Vincent, and Bonaventure, the works of Aristotle, Cicero (the *De inventione* in particular), the *Ad Herennium,* and Quintilian are *the* sources. The topics were the seats of arguments in which the orator found all that could be said about a subject; they were the places which furnished arguments to all classes of speakers—poet, lawyer, dialectician. In fact, the commonplaces were considered as guides in the progressive development of any discourse for, as Cassiodorus declared, "Wherever the human mind turns,

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49. Baldwin, *op. cit.,* pp. 172-78.

whatever thoughts it considers, it refers of necessity to one of the commonplaces." [50]

Practically, however, the dialectical content of the topics was overlooked and exaggerated emphasis was placed on style. The commonplaces were authorized for adornment and dilation in poetry, for amplification in preaching, and for elegance and distinction in letter-writing. Biography, historical and saintly, adhered slavishly, for the most part, to the traditional topics for describing persons and places. It was principally in the area of ecclesiastical and theological arguments that the theory of the topics was applied and the commonplaces aligned with reason and with a concern for the "energizing of truth" for a specific audience and its intellectual conviction.

The emphasis on the stylistic character of rhetoric and the patterned use of the commonplace is understandable when we consider the history of oratorical eloquence. The original purpose of rhetoric, as we have said, was to fashion the perfect orator, and this was its fundamental objective in the medieval centuries as well as in the pre-Christian era. Every student who passed through the school of the rhetor, regardless of the status of oratory, was indoctrinated with this type of training. The medieval man faced a world which, while it honored disputations, had nevertheless turned more and more to the manuscript in its dissemination of knowledge. Such a situation tended to destroy that mutual response between speaker and audience so essential for rhetorical effectiveness. The earlier focus on the orator's eloquent phrases, his appearance, and his gestures was being weakened through attention to the silent words on the pages of

50. Cassiodorus, *op. cit.*

the manuscript. As a result, content was often lost in form, artificiality barred originality, and thought was categorized according to tradition-bound patterns.

But this stereotyped picture of rhetoric was not the whole picture. The medieval writer and preacher was learning the art of associating the reality of contemporary experiences with the forms of conventional rhetoric. The *ars dictaminis* and the *ars praedicandi* together with the sciences of law and theology were peculiarly medieval in content although adapted to the topical structure of the classical composition. In fact, rhetoric impinged on all the arts, and the places were applied not only to methods of speaking and writing well, that is, to methods of composing letters, petitions, sermons, legal documents, or poetry, but also to canons interpreting Scripture and law and to dialectical devices of discovery and proof. As the medieval orator (whether speaking or writing) applied his traditional rhetorical training to the needs of his age, he gradually assumed a more independent skill which has left its impress on the literary works of the late Middle Ages.[51]

The discussion of the medieval theory of the commonplaces, as explained in the above pages, presents only one part of the reality. It must be supplemented by an understanding of practice, and this means that we must examine the application of the rules by which the medieval writer was guided in his use of the commonplaces in the various kinds of literature he produced.

The *ars praedicandi* was a new kind of oratory developed during the Middle Ages. The function of this "divine rhetoric," as the medieval man liked to call it, was the clear exposition of the Scriptures and its purpose

51. Richard McKeon, "Rhetoric in the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, XVII (1942), 1-32.

was the winning of souls to God; both reasons were germane to rhetoric. This sacred oratory was of two kinds: the elaborate university sermon addressed regularly to the clerics and the more plain vulgar style of sermon addressed to the people *(populares).*

In discussing the development of the sermon in medieval times, Harry Caplan emphasizes the importance of the commonplaces which found their way into medieval rhetoric through the principle of invention bequeathed to it by the ancients. Invention was necessary for selecting texts and materials for preaching, for applying methods of amplification, and for studying the demands of the audience. Dialectical invention was also adapted to the sermon. The preacher made use of syllogism as being proper to his art and claimed that subject matter did not lie in the realm of opinion and probability, but rather in truth and divine science. The sources available for the preacher were the *Organon* of Aristotle (including the *Categories* and *Topics*), the *Topica, De inventione* and *De oratore* of Cicero, the *Ars poetica* of Horace, the *Ad Herennium,* and the *Commentaries* of Boethius together with his own *De differentiis topicis.*[52]

A description of the development of the sermon with its various parts will illustrate how the commonplaces were used for providing arguments, for amplifying ideas, and for embellishing the style. The thematic method of preaching was most popular and most characteristically medieval. The sermon began with the announcement of the *theme,* usually from the Gospel of the day and always from Scripture. Then came the *protheme,* a procedure for introducing the prayer to be made at the beginning of the sermon and for capturing the attention of the audi-

52. Harry Caplan, "Classical Rhetoric and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching," *Classical Philology,* XXVIII (1933), 86.

ence. In expanding this introduction, the preacher might use examples, references from authority (comparable to the extrinsic arguments of classical rhetoric), arguments from reason, and so on. After the protheme and prayer came the *introduction* to the theme proper. Again there was a choice of topics—example (from art, nature, history), arguments from induction, from syllogisms, and enthymemes. The several *divisions* of the theme followed on which were lavished the decorative arts of rhetoric, coloration of the members, cadence, and embellishment of all kinds. The principal rhetorical device for the development of these divisions was *dilatio* which usually employed one of three dialectical places: authority, reason, or example. Some of the commonplaces listed under *authority* are similitude, description, specification, confirmation, causality, definition, and exposition. Places from *reason* might be etymology, comparison, properties, derivation, and intrinsic and extrinsic evidence. *Examples* were commonly gathered from the many collections available.[53] The moral *exhortation* which concluded the sermon used all the wealth of rhetorical ornaments needed to persuade to virtuous living.

The importance of the places of invention in the *ars praedicandi* can be seen in the numerous manuals still extant from the Middle Ages. De Poorter in the introduction to his edition of William of Auvergne mentions the *De faciebus,* an inventional list of images and allegories for preachers, which called upon the regular dialectical commonplaces for Scriptural application—*quis, quibus, ubi, quando, quomodo, quid* (from Cicero and Quintilian). The so-called *Aquinas Tractate* summarizes all sermon material in ten topics: God, the Devil, the

53. Thomas Charland, *Artes Praedicandi* (Ottawa: Inst. Etudes Medievales, 1936), pp. 194 ff.

Heavenly City, the Inferno, the world, the soul, the body, sin, penitence, and virtue. The author of this tractate promises that if these topics are committed to memory, retained and resorted to frequently, selecting such as are convenient to time, place, and audience, Scripture will truly be used to teach, to argue, and to arrest injustice so that by instruction man will be perfected in every good work of God.[54]

Biography is another literary genre rich in commonplace store. Two conceptions of the purpose of biography prevailed during the Middle Ages; the first recounted historical events as they centered around one figure, the second furnished examples of holy living and holy dying. Since most of the lives written during this period followed the methods which were developed according to a set pattern of topics, the biographer tended to produce an idealized type rather than a realistic kind of character. The purpose of these idealized lives was, then, political or ethical, and it corresponds quite evidently with the demonstrative form of oration which praises virtue or dispraises vice in a man. Consequently the commonplaces would be needed not only for presenting persuasive arguments in the realm of moral philosophy but also for adornment and delight so that virtue might be made attractive.

The influence of "commonplace" thinking in the early biographies is clearly evinced in the depiction of character. Each individual was considered as representative of a common type of humanity and his only distinguishing feature was the external actions of his life. Broad divisions of good and evil might be drawn, but not subtle distinctions in character. An example of the

54. Harry Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in Some Mediaeval Tractates on Preaching," *Speculum,* II (1927), 284-95.

commonplaces which were used in developing the cycle of a man's life is found prefixed to Speght's edition of Chaucer's poems. Speght uses these topics as the pattern for his prefatory life of Chaucer:

> Country, parentage, education, marriage, children (so much as we can find by Heraldes, Chronicles, & Record, of his Children with their marriage, lands, service, reward, issue, death), revenues, service, reward, friends, bookes, death.[55]

These topics are taken from the ancient rhetorical places and have had reputable use in every age from the Roman world through the Renaissance, and even in our modern era.

Another kind of biography which followed closely the conventional topics was hagiography or the lives of the saints. The theme of these lives was *mirabilia* rather than the *memorabilia* of the historical type. There was a tendency among the writers to exaggerate the marvelous; the examples of some model lives was contagious and the fables depicted in them became more popular than the qualities of the lives. Especially in the tenth century the "type" hagiography became popular and the patterns of the places for developing a life story became more schematic and narrowed the bounds of originality. Some of the places more commonly followed were those referring to birth and infancy, to youth and the magnified holiness of the hero, his career with the voyage to Rome, the consecration of his mission or the opposition of the wicked, the acquisition of relics, and, finally, the grace of miracles, the crowning of his life and sanctity. A special feature

55. Donald Stauffer, *English Biography before* 1700 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 60, quoting Speght's "Life of Geoffrey Chaucer" prefixed to the 1598 edition of Chaucer's poems.

of these lives was the catalogue of the virtues of the saints which had already appeared in the sixth and seventh centuries.[56] Although the medieval biographer of the lives of the saints is guided by the topical method of composition, his topics are far different in subject matter from those of classical antiquity. The topics do not furnish seats of arguments in the Aristotelian sense of the term but rather they provide examples and models which can be inserted into the lives somewhat in the manner of a commonplace used as a "speech-within-a-speech."

Towards the end of the eleventh century a new kind of rhetoric appeared, the *ars dictaminis,* an official epistolary writing related to the legal profession. Charland calls this type of rhetoric "one of the characteristic fruits of the renaissance of ancient letters and of the Latin culture of the twelfth century." [57] Alberich of Monte Cassino who lived in the second half of the eleventh century is considered the founder of this art and his books were the first real manuals of instruction to be used. According to Paetow, *Arts Course at Medieval Universities,* Boncompagna (1165-1240) was the most famous master of this epistolary genre. It was his writings pertaining to the theory and practice of the *ars dictaminis* that raised its status to an independent art. The investiture struggle, the imperial chancery, and the papal curia all contributed to the growing importance of this new art which maintained its relation with the notary's profession.[58]

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56. J. De Ghellinck, S.J., *Littérature latine au moyen âge, depuis les origines jusqu'a la fin de la renaissance Carolingienne* (Paris: Librairie Bloud & Gay, 1939), II. 62-67.

57. "L'ars dictaminis est l'un des fruits caractéristiques de la renaissance des lettres antiques et de la culture latine du XII e siécle." Charland, *op. cit.,* p. 11.

58. L. J. Paetow, *The Arts Course at Medieval Universities, with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric* ("University Studies of University of Illinois," III, No. 7; Champaign, Ill., 1910), pp. 70-91.

In what way did the medieval *ars dictaminis* make use of the commonplaces with its tradition as a set of arguments, as the amplification of virtue and as a little speech? A brief summary of a pattern for the composition of an epistle will, perhaps, answer this question.

The *salutation* was the first part of the letter and the part regarding which the etiquette of the medieval scribe was very exacting, each class in society having its own terms of address and reply. For example, to ordinary persons the Pope would use the greeting, "salutem et apostolicam benedictionem" (greetings and apostolic benediction), to the excommunicated, "spiritum consilii sanioris" (the spirit of more rational understanding), to Jews and heretics, "viam agnoscere veritatis" (to know the way of truth). Both theology and social attitudes were thus sustained by formulary rhetoric, not for one age but through many centuries. After the salutation came the *exordium* consisting of some commonplace generality, a proverb or scriptural quotation, which was destined to prepare the reader for the request to follow. The *narration* or the statement of the purpose of the letter was often amplified to great length and ended with the *petition* which usually had the form of a deduction from the major or minor premise laid down in the exordium and narration. Finally, the phrases of the *conclusion* were added with their rhetorical appeal and conventional style. The relations with oratory are still maintained even in the epistolary art—the parts of the letter are divided according to the parts of the oration.[59]

The commonplaces of the letters were found in the conventional forms for salutation and closing, the proverbs and Scriptural quotations scattered through the

59. Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in Mediaeval Culture* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1929), pp. 1-35.

epistle, and the devices of amplification and embellishment for persuasion. Topics of a dialectical nature, to be used for arguments, were generally found in the narration and petition. For the most part, however, the topics were touchstones for the divisions in the logical development of the letter. The models used for imitation together with collections of classical quotations and moral maxims in the *florilegia* provided the scribe or the student with his store of commonplaces.[60]

Another literary art which depended on the invention of the commonplaces for its development was the *ars poetica.* Until about the twelfth century this art had been a part of the grammar-school exercises and the rhetorical training of the boys. In the schools, the text of the authors were read and explicated, theoretical rules were learned, and verses were written in actual imitation of the models studied. The principal sources for the theories of the poetic arts were the *De inventione* of Cicero, the *Ad Herennium,* and the *Ars poetica* of Horace. In the twelfth century a distinction arose between rhetoric and poetics resulting in the separate art known as *poetria* or *ars poetica.*

Manuals were written for use in instruction and practice in the *ars poetica.* These manuals were a sort of exercise book for the actual writing of Latin verse with the majority of space devoted to poetic diction. The more important of these books were the *Ars versificatoria* by Matthieu de Vendôme (1175), the *Poetria nova* by Geoffroi de Vinsauf (1210), and the *Poetria* by John of Garland (c. 1250). All of these manuals stressed dilation through extensive use of the topics of amplification in classical rhetoric.

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60. *Ibid.*

The five commonplaces of invention upon which John of Garland built his poetic style and his application of them were *ubi, quid, quale, ad quid* and *qualiter. Ubi* and *quid* referred more directly to persons, an enumeration of their good qualities or faults, as found in examples and proverbs; these topics were often used as a method of praise or blame. *Quale* and *quid* were directives for expressing reality and for making the honest and useful prevail. *Qualiter* was a commonplace topic with its own little group of sub-topics such as metonomy, repetition, climax, exposition, definition and dialogue.

The primary purpose of the *Poetria* was amplification and its chief device was the commonplace. The medieval concept of the term *amplification* differed from that of the ancients. In ancient rhetoric *to amplify* meant to embellish or to extol an idea, to make it stronger; in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it meant to enlarge or to extend the idea. Diffuseness replaced intensity as an objective. The most common topics for amplification were interpretation, paraphrase, comparison, apostrophe, prosopopoeia, digression, description of persons, objects, and scenes (each of which had its own conventional list of topics), affirmation or negation.[61]

An examination of these topics reveals both their similarity and their contrast to similar ones in ancient rhetoric. They are definitely in the strain of the school exercises, especially those of Aphthonius and Hermogenes, the focus of imitation is on style, and they are considered as little orations. Praise or blame, always associated with the commonplace, is basic in the description since the most repetitious device is encomium. However, praise

61. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-15.

and blame are rarely connected with virtue and vice in the *ars poetica* but refer more frequently to places, objects, and physical qualities of persons. Such topics as the paraphrase, defined as an oration surrounding a single subject with an assumed speech, and the prosopopoeia, a figure of stretched application or an entire discourse, are comparable to the commonplaces of ancient rhetoric used as "speeches-within-speeches."

An illustration of the use of the topic *etymology* (which belongs with interpretation) shows how words may be accumulated through letters, syllables, or diction:

Through letters: *DARE*—Deus Altissimus Rex Eternus

Through syllables: ecce *CADAVER*—ecce CArnem DAtam VERmibus

Through diction: *FORTUNA*—FORTe UNA [62]

Description, which is defined as an oration gathering and presenting before the eyes that which is to be demonstrated, was one of the topics whose purpose was the amplifying of virtue, or, the praise or blame of someone. In the *ars poetica,* as Matthieu of Vendôme notes, the emphasis is on the praise of beauty, and particularly beauty in a woman, instead of on the praise of virtue. The characteristic places of invention for a person were taken from Cicero and Horace. Matthieu, using Horace, establishes seven examples in which he shows how one ought to characterize a prelate, a prince, a skillful orator, a cynical person, a virtuous woman, a beautiful woman, and an old woman. Thus conventional types were created and the places used in these descriptions had to be

62. Quoted from *Le laborintus* of Evrard l'Allemand.

memorized and followed carefully so that personal fantasy would not lead the writer astray.[63] Matthieu summarizes some of the general topics to be used in description:

> For a prelate, the strength of faith, the love of virtue, the purity of religion, the favor of piety; for a prince, the rigor of his justice; for a woman, it is a beauty, that is, the elegance of features together with a pleasing complexion.[64]

The three dominant sciences of medieval learning from the tenth century on were law, medicine, and philosophy, and each of these provided opportunities for the use of the places, but for their use in a more dialectical situation than they had in the *ars poetica.*

The topics, as has been seen, have always had an ambivalent function which assigned them a kind of intermediate position between rhetoric and dialectic. The topics used in providing arguments for probable propositions and in proving scientific demonstrations performed with equal efficiency in amplifying and embellishing a poem, a biography, or a letter. The distinguishing features by which they could usually be identified were content and form—the dialectical topic heavy with subject matter, the rhetorical, light in matter and rich in form.

It was in the law courts, both ecclesiastical and civil, that the campaign for the dominance of dialectic was fought and won. The legalists became aware gradually of the superiority of dialectical arguing over the rhetorical techniques with their artistic manipulation of words and

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63. *Ibid.,* pp. 63-85.

64. "A un prelate, la force de la foi, l'amour de la vertú, la pureté de la religión, la grâce de la pieté; a un prince, c'est la rigueur de sa justice; a une femme, c'est la beaute, c'est-a-dire l'elegance des formes unie a l'agrement du teint." *Ibid.,* p. 79.

themes. Contemporary experience could not be molded in the traditional methods of the Roman law court.

The conventional techniques invented by the legalist were the *summulae* or notes for summing up the whole content of a law, the *continuationes,* the explanations relating to the connection between groups of law, and the *distinctiones,* an analysis of relevant variations of an abstract factual situation. The seats of arguments were found in such compilations as the *Institutes,* the *Digest,* and the *Code.* The conventional formula for lectures gave the name of the author, the subject matter of the work, its intention, the part of philosophy to which it belonged, and its final cause. The *quaestio disputata,* an invention of Bulgarus, encouraged the students to discuss imaginary cases and to deliver speeches for the plaintiff and defendant. Collections of these speeches were made and circulated for the benefit of the future students. In the study of law, as in the other sciences, the techniques of invention and the commonplaces were applied but in a somewhat different manner. The ancient precepts were illustrated with familiar everyday examples, not with conventional outmoded ones.[65]

The current need of the theologians for a method of critical thinking by which they could reconcile Scriptural interpretation and the authority of the Fathers resulted in the serious study of logic as a specific science. Dialectic as it existed in practice in the medieval period took the form of a two-sided dispute, such as Abelard's *Sic et Non,* and it was taught this way in the universities. It was concerned with the treatment of probable arguments and followed Aristotle's terms and propositions and Cicero's definitions and principles. The commonplace was defined

65. Bolgar, *op. cit.,* pp. 140-48.

as the "seat of an argument" and was considered in much the same way as the topics used for probable refutation in rhetoric or dialectic. The places most frequently used were induction and deduction, scientific demonstration and definition, forms of arguments from probable premises and commonplace fallacies, maxims or propositions, and wholes and parts. Even in the more technical background of dialectic these topics were still regarded as mnemonic devices of the memory for suggesting ideas and notions adaptable to the argument at hand.

The importance of the places in the cultural tradition is shown by the way in which they were relied on even in the practice of medicine. Diseases were studied and diagnosed with the aid of aphorisms gleaned from the manuscripts of the Greek doctors. These aphorisms were the topical places in the textbooks and were committed to memory as assiduously as the moral precepts in grammar and rhetoric. The term *topica* was commonly used to indicate remedies—one went to the *topica* or "place" to secure, not an argument for proving a case, but a remedy for healing a disease. A great disparity exists between such an interpretation of the commonplace in medical terms and the interpretation of the ancient commonplace with its seat of arguments and amplification of virtue and vice.

Thus we come to the conclusion of the survey of the commonplaces from the Greek schools of rhetoric to the law courts and medical schools of the medieval universities. During the many centuries which the survey has covered, the places have experienced several changes. From the beginning of the commonplace tradition in the schools of the Greeks, the *locus communis* or the *topos* was characterized by its universal applications to all cases, by its description as a seat of arguments, its function

as an oration, either isolated as an expanded theme or incorporated within a longer one; finally, the commonplace was noted for its amplification of virtue or depreciation of vice. It was a part of every court speech and was used particularly for the embellishment and persuasiveness of its style in appealing to the emotions. The Sophistic abuse of the places was corrected by the moral reform of Isocrates and further purified by the philosophical rhetoric in which Aristotle placed the *topoi.* In Roman oratory the *locus communis* retained the position given it by Aristotle but more emphasis was placed on stylistic adornment. Both Cicero and Quintilian stressed the importance of a broad humanistic background for the successful orator.

The medieval man adopted the classical theory of the *locus communis* with its concept of virtue and vice, its philosophical content as a seat of arguments, its purpose of persuasion through amplification and embellishment of the oration, and its function as a small speech within a larger one. However, the changing function of oratory, from judicial to ceremonial or ecclesiastical, developed new notions concerning the commonplace. Invention was still the most popular device of rhetoric but instead of discovering places of arguments, it more often found devices for amplification and for topics which contained theological, medical, or legal information. The *topoi* became clichés which could be used in any type of literature —*ars dictaminis, ars praedicandi,* or *ars poetica. Dispositio* lost its ingenuity in the patterned rhetoric and was taken over later by logic. The two main reliances in the arts of speaking and writing were style and delivery.

In the midst of all this misuse of the original commonplace tradition, the medieval preacher and writer began to assert more independence in his application of the con-

ventional topical forms. Such authors as Langland, Chaucer, and Gower have given evidence in their works of an artistic freedom no longer bound by traditional conventions which categorized thinking and patterned verbal or oral expression. They had succeeded in adapting their rhetorical training to the contemporary experiences of their time.

II

Renaissance Theory of the Commonplaces

The Renaissance concept of the commonplace, which will be described in this and the following chapters, is taken here to be that which prevails over a period of approximately two hundred years, 1500-1700, in which the commonplace tradition held a prominent place in educational and cultural training. The men whose works will be discussed have been selected on the basis of a representative cross section of rhetoricians and dialecticians. This cross section is international in extent, because the educational tradition, supported on Latin language works, was international, and textbooks were likely to exert an influence, as T. W. Baldwin and others show, far beyond the confines of the country in which they were written or published. But there is some concentration on British authors as a special focus of interest. The selection is necessarily restricted to those men who have contributed definite theories about the commonplace and whose works include areas in which commonplace thinking is active. The list of authors whom Howell

treats in his *Logic and Rhetoric in England* 1500-1700 is used where it can be of service, but it could not be followed in its entirety because not all of these authors include the commonplace as a distinct tradition in the history of the arts of communication.

The commonplace tradition, associated in its Greek and Latin origins and in the Middle Ages with the arts of dialectic and rhetoric, comes to the Renaissance escorted by these same arts of communication. The commonplaces provided the patterns of thought and forms of discourse, and dialectic and rhetoric formed the bond of communication between man's thought and its verbal expression.

However, before the dialectical and rhetorical commonplaces can be discussed, a basic concept of the *locus communis* as the Renaissance students and professors understood it needs to be established. A good vantage point from which to view this concept is Aristotle's definition of a place or *topos* as a "place where" one finds arguments, or a pigeonhole in the mind (as Lane Cooper expands the meaning).[1] As handled in the writers on commonplaces this definition vacillates between two poles or images. One can think of a *topos* as an abstract general term similar to the categories and "predicables" (genus, species, etc.) inviting analysis. Such would be definition, division, causes, effects, adjuncts, witnesses, and the like. These would rarely occur as *headings* in commonplace books. One did not ordinarily cull matter from reading and file it under a heading such as "divisions" or "effects." These abstract, general terms can be called systematic or analytic topics. One spins things out of them. In their range they suggest Aristotle's commonplaces.

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1. Cooper, *op. cit.*, pp. xiv and 155.

But one can think of a topic also as a more concrete subjects heading under which ideas, images, maxims, or excerpts of all sorts could be stored, a heading such as virtue, government, or gardening. These are what one finds often as headings in commonplace books. One files things under these. They suggest somewhat Aristotle's idea of "special topics." Aristotle had not developed his concept of special topics very far at all. He simply mentions them, and thinks of them as applying to the various sciences. Some of the subject headings one meets with would correspond to Aristotle's idea in so far as they are one or another of the sciences themselves. Thus a commonplace book might gather items under "ethics" or "metaphysics." But others of the headings are not such names of sciences at all, and can at times be rather whimsical, such as "blush," "entertainment," "phraseology," and "gnomology." It could be that with a certain amount of ingenuity each of the headings one finds in commonplace books, no matter how whimsical, could be subsumed under one or another science or art, and thus all these subject headings could be considered as somehow or other "special topics" or subdivisions of "special topics" in Aristotle's sense. But since this is not certain, and since his own idea of the special topics, as we have it, is underdeveloped and by no means entirely clear, it seems best to call these subject headings not "special topics" but the more noncommittal "subject topics."

Writers on the subject often referred to the use of the topics metaphorically in terms of a hunting scene in which the places became the habitats of various animals which could be identified by the exterior marks surrounding them. This image was always associated with the art of rhetorical invention, and, as the Renaissance rhetoricians used it, they never failed to become confused be-

tween the notion of an argument or topic as a storehouse of other arguments and as the location of single arguments. Both were the result of a mental "hunt" but the student was never quite sure which he had found, the "subject topic" with its storehouse of material or the "analytic topic" with its single argument.

The use of the *topos* as a procedure for locating arguments was very common in the Renaissance. A glance at the hundreds of commonplace books in the schools and libraries illustrates very well the importance of the topics or commonplace headings as guides to the student eagerly pursuing eloquence and wisdom. A few scattered definitions of the term "place" express the same idea. Thomas Wilson in *The Rule of Reason* (1551) calls a place "the restying corner of an argumente, or else a marke whiche geve warning to our memorie," [2] and Sherry in his work on *Schemes and Tropes* (1550) writes that "thys woorde place, is taken foure maner of wayes," and defines it in the "third sence" as "seates of argumentes, whyche the Rethoricianes do apply to eche kyndes of causes." [3] Blundeville, some fifty years later, expresses his description of a "place" as a "marke or token, shewing from whence any Argument . . . is to be taken." [4] In the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bacon follows the same definition of the earlier writers that a topic is "place where a thing is to be looked for, marked and indexed." [5] In the middle of the seventeenth century the idea of the *locus topicus* as a

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2. Thomas Wilson, *The Rule of Reason, Conteinyng the Arte of Logique Sette forthe in Englishe* (London, 1553 [1st ed.: 1551]), fol. 37 r.

3. Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes . . .* (London, 1550), p. 72.

4. M. Blundeville, *The Arte of Logicke* (London, 1619 [1st ed.: 1599]), pp. 85-86.

5. Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding (Cambridge: Printed at Riverside Press, 1863), Vol. IX, Bk. V, Ch. 3, p. 84.

place or seat of an argument was still being retained. Polman defines a topic in this way and emphasizes his meaning by adding, "For just as the body is contained in a physical place, so in the topical place the argument is found from whence it is then brought forth." [6]

These places or topical headings whose principal function was to mark the location of arguments varied in name according to the subject matter. In the "arts" were included physics, ethics, metaphysics, since these tend more to be commonplaces; in theology, the places are such terms as God, the Trinity, Sin, Virtue, the Commandments, and the like; in medicine, they become the *loci* in which prescriptions and remedies for diseases are found, such as "topics . . . which repel fumes from the head," or "topic . . . for driving away of colds or chills, as in lethargy." [7] In law, the canons of the Church or of political jurisdiction are the headings, "Of excommunication," or "Of penances." [8] A description of the commonplace books, in which these topics were used, in a later chapter, will illustrate more clearly their significance as aids to invention and memory.

The use of the commonplace as a stimulus and guide to thought and expression was really only an initial step towards its development in a much fuller sense. Once a "place" had been located, its contents were thoroughly ransacked for material appropriate to the argument in

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6. "Quemadmodum enim in loco physico corpus continetur, ita in loco topico argumentum, quod inde depromitur." John Polman, *Breviarum theologicum continens definitiones, descriptiones, et explicationes terminorum theologicorum* (Parisiis, 1654), p. 12.

7. "Sequuntur topica, quorum alia fumos a capite repellunt, . . . topica . . . frigidorum utitur ad repellendum, ut in lethargo." Jean Riolan, *Artis bene medendi methodus generalis* . . . (Parisiis, 1638 [1st ed.: 1601]), p. 34.

8. Nicholas Everhard, *Loci argumentorum legales* . . . (Francofurti, 1591 [1st ed.: 1516]), p. 8.

hand. For example, if the theme to be developed was *Virtue,* one could easily discover this "subject-topic" in his commonplace book; but the topic only furnished the subject. It would be the systematic or analytic topics such as division, definition, related things, and opposites, that would explore the full meaning of the subject, "Virtue," and the collections of quotations, examples, proverbs, and sententious sayings, found within the "seat" of the "subject topic" that would embellish and amplify it. Thus the Renaissance student consistently sought the rich store of invention which the topical headings yielded. These places or topical headings were referred to as "cells and receptacles" in which memorable *sententiae* were hidden, and in which excerpts taken from readings or from lectures were noted down for future use. They were "fonts of ornaments" and a "common treasury" or, as Bacon calls them, "promptuaries" from which arguments concerning common matters were taken. For Vossius they are *domicilia* or homes of arguments for all causes, and Ralph Lever, in his logic, refers to them as "storehouses" or "rooms" in which all plain meaning words are placed, each in its particular room.[9]

This association of the commonplaces with the notion of storehouses is closely related to the *inventio* of dialectic and rhetoric. The Latin word *invenire* means "to come upon" or "to find," which implies a searching for something. The topics were to furnish the marks or indices designating the "stores" of invention and, if the orator recognized these marks, he would discover a wealth of "copia" for his speech. Invention in this sense, and as the Renaissance man conceived it, was the key which opened the wisdom of the past that it might be applied

9. Ralph Lever, *The Arte of Reason, rightly termed Witcraft* (London, 1573), p. 7.

to contemporary experience. A man's reputation as an orator or a writer was usually determined by the skill and power of his inventive genius. In *The English Secretorie,* Angel Day gives some notion of the broad scope of invention:

> Invention wherein plentifully is searched and considered, what kind of matter, how much varietie of sentences, what sorte of figures, how many similitudes, what approbations, diminutions, insinuations and circumstances are presently needful or furthering to the matter in handling.[10]

Even the making of a delectable poem, according to Gascoigne, rested on the ground of some "aliquid salis" or fine invention as did also the praising of a gentlewoman:

> In praising a gentlewoman I would not praise her crystal eyes, nor cherrie lippes but find some supernatural cause whereby my penne mighte walke in the superlative degree. Or for imperfections I would raise the praise of her commendation. If I made some pretense in love, I would make a strange discourse on some intolerable passion, or find occasion to plead by example of history or discover my disquiet in shadows through allegory.[11]

Gascoigne advised that one should "stand most upon the excellencie of your Invention, and sticke not to studie

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10. Angel Day, *The English Secretorie: or, plaine and direct Method, for the enditing of all manner of Epistles or Letters* (London, 1595 [1st ed.: 1586]), pp. 8-9.

11. George Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes of Instruction* Concerning the making of verses or rhyme in English, written at the request of Master Edouardo Donati, 1575, quoted in *Elizabethan Critical Essays,* ed. G. Gregory Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), I, 46-48.

deeply for some fine devise." [12] If one had learned well the rules of invention, fine and pleasant words would follow.

The consideration of the places as thesauri and storehouses implied that the matter had been collected and stored beforehand. In other words, for the Renaissance it meant the collecting and assembling of material in commonplace books so that the student would always have available an abundance of oratorical equipment. Of course, such a method of "storing" knowledge excluded anything like the invention of new sciences as Bacon described it in his *Advancement of Learning*. This concern with the commonplace books, spurred on as it was by the humanistic ideals, spread to all classes of society and was as popular in the home and on the street as in the classroom. As a result, the contents of the places became as varied and numerous as the lists of arts and sciences of human knowledge. Such topics as metaphysics, phrases, words, grammar, jurisprudence, ecclesiastics, oeconomics, man, history, fable, and practical arts made up some of the "subject" headings in the collections. These were, in turn, divided and subdivided into other topics in order to provide minute development of any theme. In such a situation, invention lost sight of its basic foundation in dialectic and became lost in a maze of bypaths with the Renaissance man in his quest for universal knowledge.

After the *topoi* have been sighted and their treasury of invention explored, there remains one further element of the commonplace to be defined and that is its place as a "speech-within-a-speech." This concept of the *locus communis* as an *oratio* marks its full development in amplifying virtue or vice, in adorning and embellishing the

12. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

speech, and in moving the audience to virtuous action. The commonplace, whether it be considered as an argument, a thesis, or an oration, is a rhetorical device brought into the main speech from outside the cause being pleaded. Its primary purpose is to persuade to action, to teach, to move, and to delight. Such a theory of the commonplace had its origins in the early Greek rhetoricians—Aphthonius, Theon, and Hermogenes—all of whom were known in the Renaissance. These Greek writers explicitly define the *locus communis* as "an oration amplifying the good or evil within someone" ("locus communis est oratio, bona aut mala, quem alicui insunt, augmentens") and then name specific places through which the commonplace topic is to be drawn in order that it be amplified into a minor speech with a definite place in the major oration. The topics used in developing the commonplace are listed in Aphthonius as *exordium* (this is optional and used only for an exercise because strictly speaking the *locus communis* has no *exordium),* contrary, exposition, comparison, *sententia,* conjecture, exclusion of pity, just, legitimate, useful, possible, honest, future effect, and epilog (this, too, is added by way of exercise in order that the commonplace may contain all the parts of an oration from the *exordium* to the epilog).[13]

This idea of the commonplace as an oration came into the Renaissance together with the other traditional characteristics for, as has already been pointed out, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, the author of the *Ad Herennium,* and the medieval orators thought of the *locus communis* in

13. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata Aphthonii sophistae, partim a Rodolpho Agricola, partim a Ioanne Maria Catanaeo Latinitate donata: Cum iuculentis et utilibus in eadem scholiis Reinhardi* (Lorichii, 1565 ed.), pp. 97-100.

this way. That such an idea prevailed through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is evident from the works of those writing for the schools.[14]

The commonplace in such a tradition becomes more than a topic or even an argument. Rather, it reaches full maturity only when it has been amplified and distinguished by the rhetorical embellishments which adorn it, by the content of virtue or vice, and when it has been brought into the formal speech for teaching, delighting, and moving to action. In the *De inventione* the same concept of the *locus communis* is described by Cicero:

> Every kind of argument can be discovered under these headings: but it is the embellishment of the argument once it has been discovered, and the arrangement of it in definite divisions, which make the speech attractive to the audience, the elaboration of the argument is necessary to the highest degree.[15]

This mature concept of the commonplace, which includes its function as a topic or heading marking a "place where" arguments can be found, as a storehouse containing a wealth of material to be used in composing orations and proving causes, and as a "speech-within-a-speech," for adornment, amplification, and persuasion, was frequently included in a single definition.

Melanchthon in his desire to unify all knowledge at-

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14. Erasmus, *De copia,* 1511; Camerarius, *Elementa rhetoricae,* 1540; A. Lully, *Progymnasmata rhetorica,* 1551; Nizzola, *Apparatus latinae locutionis,* 1596; J. Riolan, *Artis bene medendi methodus generalis,* 1638; C. Pajot, *Tyrocinium eloquentiae,* 1648; J. Micraelius, *Lexicon philosophicum,* 1653; Vossius, *De logices et rhetoricae natura,* 1658; F. Pomey, *Indiculus universalis . . . scientiarum et artium,* 1672; C. Valerius, *Rhetorica,* 1596; J. Heineccius, *Operum ad universam iuris prudentiam philosophiam,* 1744.

15. Cicero *De inventione* i. 30. 50.

tempts, in his *Elementorum rhetorices* (1519), to include every function of the commonplace in his explanation:

> The commonplace contains the major premise of the syllogism; it contains every plan for persuading and moving minds to virtue or away from vice; the places are fonts of ornaments and regions of arguments; the places contain not only virtues and vices but the chief ideas in every kind of doctrine which are the font and summation of the art.[16]

An example from Sherry's *Schemes and Tropes* illustrates the diversity of the functions assigned to the commonplace:

> They are called commonplaces, because thei be entreated of, of bothe partes, althoughe not in all one cause.
>
> Lyke to thys sorte be sentences, whyche wee exaggerate as it were wythoute the cause, but so that they serve so the cause whiche wee have in hande: as bee the amplifications of vertues, and the exaggeracions of vices. . . . A common place shall bee, wyth wordes to exaggerate howe much it profiteth to keepe goodnesse, to bee in companye wyth good men, and contrarye howe great myschefe the companye of evil men dothe cause.
>
> In the third sence places be called seates of argumentes, whyche the Rhetoricianes do applie to eche kyndes of causes . . .
>
> The fourth places be general, whych declare what belongeth to everye thynge, and howe oute of eche of them there be taken argumentes, partly necessary and

16. "Etenim fere in omni probatione, maior nascitur ex aliquo communi loco. . . . Ac vero locos communes, non tantum virtutes et vicia, sed in omni doctrinae genere praecipua capita, quae fontes et summam artis continent . . . ut fontes ornamentorum et negotiorum regiones animadverti queant." Philipp Melanchthon, *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* (1572 [1st ed.: 1519]), pp. 68 and 120.

partlye probable. . . . They profite much both to judgement, and to endightynge.[17]

Sherry is trying, very ineffectually, to tie together all the loose ends in the commonplace tradition. His careful division of the four parts of his definition only accentuates the morass in which he unsuspectingly leaves his commonplace theory.

A century later John Micraelius, in his *Lexicon philosophicum,* defined the commonplace in terms very similar to those of the sixteenth-century rhetoricians:

> The commonplace is a thesis for the orators to which they proceed from the hypothesis for the purpose of amplifying and teaching.
>
> Commonplaces are cells and receptacles in which we hide memorable *sententiae* and those things which we note of benefit from reading or listening and which we hope to use in the future.
>
> Places, topical or dialectical, are the seats of arguments from whence we take something which leads to the proof of a case; whence they are also called commonplaces, that is, from the name, from genus, from cause.[18]

The definitions given above might be called the summation of the basic idea of the commonplace as accepted by the Renaissance. However, this general concept must be analyzed in its particular parts, that is, with respect to

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17. Sherry, *op. cit.,* pp. 70-72.

18. "Locus communis est oratoribus thesis, ad quam saepe ab hypothesi progrediuntur causa amplificandi et docendi. Loci communes sunt veluti cellulae et receptacula, in quibus sententias memorabiles et ea recondimus quae beneficio lectionis vel auditionis percipimus quaeque nobis usui speramus futura. Loci topici seu dialectici sunt sedes argumentorum unde depromuntur quae ad aliquid probandum conducunt; unde etiam vocantur loci communes, exempli gratia, ex nomine, ex genere, ex causa, et cetera." John Micraelius, *Lexicon philosophicum* . . . (Jenae, 1653), p. 601.

the dialectical and rhetorical places and the metaphorical substructure upon which these places are constructed, if one is to obtain a clearer perception of the Renaissance "commonplace mentality."

1. DIALECTICAL PLACES

The dialectical places, which will be discussed first, have their basis in Renaissance logic and depend to a great extent upon the principles of that science for their own theoretical exposition. The science of logic or the "art of reasoning" as it was commonly defined was primarily an art of discourse teaching how to "reason probably on both parties of all matters." [19] In Lever's *Witcraft* the definition was explained more fully:

> [Logic] teaches the order of reasoning wittely in doubtful matters, to speak forcefully on them for or *contra*.
>
> Yields a general understanding to judge of all matters and to discern what is said or done according to reason, and what is not done or said.
>
> Debates all matters; all sciences can apply their principles or general precepts.
>
> Teaches how to discover and disprove error.[20]

A review of other well-known works on logic such as those of Melanchthon, Cox, Ramus, Fenner, and Blundeville, proposes similar ideas which, if categorized, would fall more or less into three processes corresponding to the threefold operation of the Renaissance mind which Father Costello describes as (1) inventing the simple idea or concept; (2) arranging or judging the concepts to be joined in forming a proposition; (3) reasoning with the proposi-

19. Wilson, *op. cit.*, fol. 3 ᵛ.
20. Lever, *op. cit.*, Forespeach, p. 1.

tions to be linked so as to arrive at a conclusion. The three dialectical processes which are included in the study of logic are: (1) to define and divide; (2) to recognize error and seek truth; (3) to connect true arguments.[21] A combination of these two—the operation of the mind and the dialectical processes—would result in a pattern similar to the following:

1. Simple idea or concept: a person or thing ..... *operation of the mind*
   Definition, division, or enumeration of kinds of things in their generic concept ..... *dialectical process*
2. Judgment: determine whether statement was complete, true or false, ambiguous or consistent ..... *operation of the mind*
   Recognition of error and seeking of truth ..... *dialectical process*
3. Reasoning: linking of propositions so as to arrive at a conclusion ..... *operation of the mind*
   Connecting true arguments and arriving at the truth ..... *dialectical process*

This table illustrates in summary form the various principles included or implied, more or less, vaguely or explicitly, in the various definitions of logic as an art of discourse. It exposes the mental activity at work in the progressive development of a simple concept; it demonstrates the necessity of the "places" and their appropriateness in a particular dialectical process. By way of example: the topics, definition and division are allotted to the per-

21. William Costello, S.J., *The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 47-49.

son or thing of the simple idea; the syllogism, to judgment; and the enthymeme or example, to forming the conclusion and arriving at truth.

A recall of Aristotle's explanation of dialectic will reveal similar elements:

> Dialectic is the art of disputing by question and answer, of attacking and defending a given thesis from principles of mere probability, such as the opinion of men in general, or of the majority, or of certain eminent authorities; for this purpose he collected *topoi* or general principles of probability from which the premises of the disputations were to be drawn.[22]

In this definition, as expanded by Owen, the commonplaces or *topoi* of general principles become the premises of the thesis which is proved from probability. This is similar to the situation in the Renaissance where the commonplaces, since they were considered as universal propositions, were assumed as principles of the dialectical syllogism, and were brought into the argument from the thesis.

The commonplace in the thesis and hypothesis.—The movement of the argument from the hypothesis to the thesis and the bringing in of the *locus communis* for the purpose of persuasion and action on the part of the judges is discussed at some length in many of the Renaissance treatises on logic. The Renaissance men thought of the hypothesis as the restricted question or statement of argumentation and the thesis as an unrestricted one. Agricola, in his expansion of the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius, calls the commonplace "nothing else than the major propo-

22. Aristotle, *The Organon or Logical Treatises of Aristotle with the Introduction of Porphyry,* introd. and trans. Octavius Freire Owen (London: George Bell and Sons, 1902), II, 357-59.

sition of syllogisms" ("loci communes non sunt aliud quam maiores ratiocinationum propositiones"),[23] while Chytraeus, in *De ratione discendi* (1562), considered the whole force of the subject, exposed in the hypothesis, as resting in the arguments arising from the commonplace or thesis which lent itself to every kind of interpretation.[24] In fact, one might conclude from his treatment that the whole purpose of the commonplace as brought in to the dialectical oration, and as conceived of by the logicians, was to strengthen the arguments which had already been set forth by amplifying the virtue or vice related to the case, or, in the plea of the defendant, to diminish the seriousness of the crime and to make a plea for mercy.

Melanchthon explains his understanding of the thesis and hypothesis by way of example. The hypothesis is the matter about which there is controversy, surrounded by circumstances—"Ought war not to be provoked against the Turks?"—and the thesis—"Is a Christian not permitted to wage war?"—is the general question.[25] The commonplace is applied to the general question for amplifying and moving.

Alsted, in his enumeration of places of invention under logic, *Sex libris informatus* (1616), lists the three kinds of orations as arising from the hypothesis: the *deliberative*—suasion and discussion: *demonstrative*—praise and vituperation; *judicial*—controversy or *status* which is threefold: conjecture, definition, and quality. It is from the demonstrative speech that one "goes to" *(transitus)* the treatise of the commonplaces which are innumerable. Alsted then names the places which can be sought from

23. Aphthonius, *op. cit.*, p. 97 ᵛ.

24. David Chytraeus, *De ratione discendi et ordine studiorum recte instituendi* (*Witebergae*, 1562), p. E3 ᵛ.

25. Melanchthon, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

practical philosophy such as fortitude, justice, liberality, or, against luxury, drunkenness, and calumny. Other suggested commonplaces which are to be expanded include *fabula, sententiae, pictura,* the topics of Ramus (cause, effect, subject, adjunct, opposite, comparison, names, distribution, definitions, and testimony), and the topics of Bodin in politics (distribution, postulate, definition, rules, laws of the people, and forensic science).[26] The same inductive process is implied here of moving from the particular or restricted subject of the hypothesis to the more general thesis or topic found in the commonplaces which serves for the praise or vituperation of someone.

In his work on rhetoric (1596), Cornelius Valerius calls the thesis the *locus communis* in which something is either praised or dispraised in some part ("loci illi communes seu theses quibus aliquid in alterutram partem vel attollitur vel deprimitur").[27] He then proceeds with an example to illustrate his statement:

> If you were to praise someone for his eager pursuit of law: this will be a commonplace; for how much benefit a knowledge of law brings to human society. If you were to praise the bravery of Coclito: (this will be a commonplace): how much influence such courage has in wars.[28]

An orator with a love for display could by his inventive genius amplify and embellish the topic of *fortitudo* into

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26. John Alsted, *Sex libris informatus: in quorum I. Praecognita. II. Oratoria communis. III. Epistolica. IV. Methodus eloquentiae. V. Critica. VI. Rhetorica ecclesiastica* (editio tertia; Herbornae Nassoviorum, 1616), Lib. I, Cap. XXV, "Locus communis," pp. 37-40.

27. Cornelius Valerius, *Rhetorica Cornelii Valerii* (title page missing [1596]), p. 37.

28. "Velut si quem laudes a juris studio; locus communis erit; quantam adfert utilitatem humanae societati juris cognitio. Si coclitis fortitudinem: (hoc erit locus communis) quantum in bellis habeat momenti fortitudo." *Ibid.,* pp. 37-38.

an eloquent little speech for the delight and persuasion of his audience.

In his discussion of the thesis, Valerius gives a little oration from Cicero's speech for Milo in which the argument moves from the hypothesis to the thesis:

> The commonplace, in the *Pro Milone,* concerns the natural right to defend oneself against force. "This, O judges, is a law, not written but innate in man: a law which we have neither learned, nor received, nor read; but we have appropriated it from nature herself, we have been nourished with it, we have expressed it not according to what we have been taught, but to what we have accomplished, not according to what we have ordained, but to what we have been imbued with; so that if our life had fallen into some treachery, into the violence or weapons of thieves or enemies, every honorable means would have been used for safety." (This is the commonplace) "Because if Cicero were to defend someone else similar to Milo, he would use the same." [29]

In a commentary on dialectic, *Philosophia vetus et nova ad usum scholae accommodata* (1678), an entire chapter is given to the discussion of the middle term or hypothesis and the commonplaces (Cap. VII, "De inventione medii ac de iis locis qui communes dicuntur").[30] The editor of this work acknowledges that there is noth-

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29. "Locus communis est in Miloniana de vi naturaliter arcenda: 'est ergo haec, judices, non scripta, sed nata lex; quam non didicimus, accepimus, legimus; verum ex natura ipse arripuimus, hausimus, expressimus ad quam non docti, sed facti, non instituti, sed imbuti sumus: ut si vita nostra in aliquas insidias, si in vim, in tela, aut latronum, aut inimicorum incidisset; omnis honesta ratio esset expediendae salutis,' (Hic locus est communis) 'Quia si defendat Cicero quem vi alium Miloni similem, eodem poterit uti.'" *Ibid.,* pp. 38-40.

30. *Philosophia vetus et nova ad usum scholae . . . Tomus primus, qui institutiones logicas et logicam ipsam continet* (Parisiis, 1678), pp. 50-53.

ing more difficult than to prove a question, but the most difficult question is the middle term or finding a suitable argument for proving the subject. The method usually adopted is the bringing in of the commonplace and for this reason "the rhetoricians and dialecticians invent so many commonplaces" ("hinc tot communes locos et rhetores et dialectici excogitarunt").[31] A distinction is made between the dialectic question which disputes about each side and the analytic question which makes use of common arguments from certain places, taken from certain seats, such as the *Topics* of Aristotle. The arguments to be used in proving these questions are to be "dug out" from grammar, dialectic, and metaphysics or from the "places" corresponding to these three topics—etymology, genus, and species—and from the common notions of cause and effect.[32]

Arguments transferable to many causes.—In conjunction with the arguments which were brought in to the thesis in order to secure judgment on the cause set forth in the hypothesis, were those which were transferable to many causes and common to both sides of the disputation. Cicero is perhaps the originator of this aspect of the commonplace as a "common" topic in the sense that it was "common" to both sides of the case.

In the scholia of the 1565 edition of Aphthonius (Lorich's commentary on the translation of Rudolph Agricola and John Catanaeus), Cicero, the *Ad Herennium,* and Trapezuntius are quoted as calling a commonplace one which was for both the accused and the defendant, for witnesses and against them, for suspicions and against them.[33]

31. *Ibid.,* p. 50.
32. *Ibid.,* pp. 51-53.
33. Aphthonius, *op. cit.,* p. 96.

Vives implies this "common" implication in his discussion of the *locus communis* as themes with no particular causes; he refers to them as traditionally accepted maxims *(sententiae translatitiae)* having in themselves nothing to do with controversy. However, because the places lend themselves to application and transference to definite circumstances, they are adopted by both the accused and the defendant.[34]

Thomas Wilson in his *Art of Logike* designates a place as marking an argument which may be used to speak probably "in the one parte or the other." [35] Richard Sherry holds an opinion similar to Wilson's, that the places are common both to the accuser and the accused, but makes a distinction by adding that this does not hold true in the same cause. He names the four causes with their particular application of the places:

> Logical: which is called properly disputation
> Suasoriae: honest, profitable, pleasant, easy, necessary
> Demonstrative: kindred, country, goods of the body and of the mind
> Judicial: denial of those already spoken of [36]

Camerarius, a sixteenth-century rhetorician, who has written commentaries on both the Greek and Latin writers, calls an argument which is common to both sides of a cause a "two-headed disputation" which is brought forth in each part and discussed by the plaintiff and the defendant respectively about a universal topic in each

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34. Juan Luis Vives, *Vives: On Education,* trans. of 1540 *De tradendis disciplinis* with introd. Foster Watson (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1913), p. 184.
35. Wilson, *op. cit.,* fol. 3 v.
36. Sherry, *op. cit.,* p. 71.

case. In such controversies the argument may be used as an amplification in a plea for forgiveness or as a diminution in a plea for mercy.[37]

Aphthonius's teaching about the argument transferable to several causes was explained by Richard Rainolde in *The Foundacion of Rhetorike:*

> This oracion of a common place, serueth bothe for the accuser and the defender.
>
> For the accuser, to exasperate and moue the Judges or hearers, against the offender, or accused.
>
> For the defendour to replie, and with all force [and] strength of matter, to mollifie and appease the perturbacions of the Judges and hearers, to pulle doune and deface the contrarie alledged.[38]

Related to the two-headed disputation is the distinction which the Renaissance dialecticians made between the *locus communis* and the *locus proprius.* In metaphorical thought, the *locus communis* is that which walks around the whole body, as comparable to the vaulted surface of the sky—a reference to the universal nature of the commonplace in its application to the thesis. The *locus proprius* is defined as that which walks around the first (thesis) as the hollowed surface of the vessel in respect to the wine contained within, that is, the hypothesis with its limited scope. Both Frey and Valerius use this figure. Valerius expresses it with relation to the places which the *locus communis* encompasses:

> The commonplace is that which amplifies a deed which

37. Joachim Camerarius, *Elementa rhetoricae sive capita exercitiorum studii puerilis . . .* (Basileae, 1540), pp. 339-40.

38. Rainolde, *op. cit.,* fol. xxxiij.

has been properly proved, and, as it were, that which runs about the open plain. (Such topics) as virtue, vice, war, peace, rewards, punishments, law, the soul, nature, God, mutual participation, the affection of youth, activity of the mind, a happy life, custom, dignity of office, strength, favor of common people, the arts, native skill, the method by which all things are accomplished.[39]

Such heterogeneous topics indicate the adaptability of the Renaissance mind in fashioning a classical theory according to a contemporary pattern. Valerius, in explaining the function of the commonplace, as a thesis for praise or blame, is careful to inform his reader that these places are not only concerned with virtue and vice but with other things also which are customarily discussed in common life and in treating of literature.[40] The same purpose prevails for these places as prevailed for the *loci communes* of Aristotle and Cicero; they were brought in from outside the cause but, because they were adjunct to it, they rendered the cause more illustrious.[41]

In contrast to these *loci communes* with their universal application were the *loci proprii* or, as they were more commonly thought of, the places of "circumstances," so called because they "stand around" the subject. Those places which are attributes to persons and things were included in the circumstances, the six most important of

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39. "Communis locus est qui factum rite probatum amplificat, campoque velut decurrit aperto. Ut virtus, vitium, bellum, pax, praemia, poenae, lex, animus, natura, Deus, communio, prolis affectus, animi commotio, vita beata, consuetudo magistratus, vis, aura popelli, artes, ingenium, ratio qua cuncta geruntur." Valerius, *op. cit.* p. 37.

40. "Sunt hi loci non tantum virtutum et vitiorum, sed aliarum etiam rerum, de quibus in vita communi et literarum tractatione dici solet." *Ibid.*

41. "Adhibentur hi quidem extra caussam sed qui caussae adjuncti illam reddant illustriorem." *Ibid.*

which are person, thing, cause, time, place, and the method to which the means and instruments are able to be referred. Some of the attributes which might be listed under *person* are name, nationality, genus, country, fortune, body, and education; under *cause:* anger, hope of money, sobriety, love, and mercy. Since such topics apply to a particular person or thing, their field of expansion would necessarily be restricted to a limited area, and, consequently, their designation as *locus proprius* or as a place appropriate for the hypothesis.

These places of circumstances were looked upon as contributing to the probability and clarity of the cause being pleaded by supplying the particular details to be used in a careful description of it. In general, topics of this nature were thought of as belonging to the rhetorician rather than to the logician because they involved praise or blame of an individual or of a deed. Consequently, they will be discussed more fully under the rhetorical places.

Another distinction frequently noted, and one which has some affinity with the common and particular places, is that between the concept of the *proposition* and the *commonplace*. The origins of this notion are rooted in the Greek rhetoricians. Camerarius in his translation of Theon's work describes the proposition as a more deliberate oration admitting controversy from the definition of persons and in every other respect. The commonplace amplifies the *thing* confessed while the proposition amplifies the *controversy*.[42] This corresponds to Priscian's teaching that the commonplace is the amplifying of a cause proved and demonstrated while a proposition is a

42. Joachim Camerarius, *Theonis sophistae primae apud rhetorem exercitationes . . .* (Basileae, 1541 ed.), p. 341.

question of a doubtful matter.[43] In a further explication of his text, Camerarius calls the proposition a place which supplies the introduction of arguments against the crime, such as the accusation of the investigator of the injury. Furthermore, this place has both definite persons and proofs while the commonplace has no proofs and praises or blames a general topic.

Aphthonius distinguishes between the *commonplace* and the *thesis* by using the same basis for differentiation as the previous writers—the commonplace amplifies and increases; the thesis explains and proves; the commonplace declaims as if to make certain; the thesis disputes and discusses; the commonplace is for moving; the thesis is for consideration.[44] In this juxtaposing of the commonplace and the more specific places—the proposition and thesis—with respect to their purpose, the diversity of the terms employed becomes confusing, yet the *proposition* of Camerarius and Priscian bears the same relation to the commonplace as the *thesis* of Aphthonius. If the function of the proposition and thesis is examined, it will be found to be the same as that of the hypothesis, so that it would seem the sole purpose of the analysis of the dialectical places centers around the thesis and the hypothesis or around the general and particular arguments.

In all of the varied notions and extensions of the function of the *locus communis* in syllogistic reasoning, one factor remains constant—its universal character which makes it adaptable to any cause whether forensic, political, or ceremonial. Although the commonplace may be in-

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43. "Inter locum communem et positionem hoc est differentiae, quod locus communis est convicte et manifestae rei exaggeratio, positio autem dubiae rei quaestio." Aphthonius, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

serted in any part of the oration because of its general nature, it is most appropriately applied to the peroration or conclusion after the proof has been made. It is at this point in the speech where the decision of the case rests and the commonplace oration becomes functional in moving the judges either to forgiveness or to greater leniency. Thus its proper position in the general question, either to praise or blame, opens wide the possibilities of rhetorical adornment for delight and for moral persuasion to virtuous action.

Classification of dialectical places.—Generally speaking, the dialectical topics were classified as "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" as to their relation to the nature of the subject brought in from the outside. This division is based on the classical enumerations of the Latin writers beginning with Cicero, the *Ad Herennium,* and Quintilian. The predicables and predicaments of Aristotle make their appearance, but not in their original comprehension.

The definition of logic which Leonard Cox gives in his work on rhetoric (1524) includes the more essential topics used in the discovery of the truth of a thing:

> Logike is a playn and sure way to instruct a man of the trouth of every thynge, that in it the natures, causes, partes, and effectes of thynges are by certayne rules discussed, and servhed out so that nothing can be perfectly and properly knowen but by rules of Logicke which is nothing but an observacyon or a dylygent markynge of nature. Whereby in every thynge mannes reason dothe consyder what is fyrste, what last, what proper, what improper.[45]

45. Leonard Cox, *The Art or Crafte of Rhetoryke,* (Imprinted at London, 1532 [1st ed.: 1524]), fol. A^{v}.

Cox discusses the places of logic in relation to themes. Every theme is contained under one of four causes: logical, demonstrative, deliberative, or judicial. The first, logical or disputation, is comprised of two themes which are either simple or compound. The example of a simple theme is: "What is justice?" and, of a compound theme: "Justice is a virtue," a statement which includes two topics instead of one. The places of the simple theme are listed as (1) the definition of the thing, (2) causes, (3) parts, and (4) effects. Here Cox makes the observation that if logic uses these places they will be plain and compendious, but, if rhetoric uses them, they will be extended and "paynted with many figures and ornaments belongyng to the science." The places of the compound theme are (1) definition, (2) causes, (3) parts, (4) like, and (5) contrary; the two places added, like and contrary, are necessary in proving the compound theme which is either true or false. In concluding the illustration of the logical theme, Cox remarks that, concerning the invention of arguments, rhetoric and logic may use the same place but "as concernynge the crafte to forume argumentes when thou hast founde them in theyr places, that must be lerned of the Logician, where he treateth of the fourme of syllogismes, enthimemes and inductions." [46] The remaining three themes will be discussed under the rhetorical places.

Ralph Lever in *Arte of Logike* appoints ten storehouses for the places:

> There are tenne generall wordes whiche maye well be called storehouses, not onely for the store of wordes, which they conteyne (comprising all playn meaning wordes) but also for the good order they keepe in placing of wordes in their particular roomes, with brief rules,

46. *Ibid.*, fol. Bi ᵛ.

as notes sette on packets) declaring theyr nature and properties.[47]

The ten storehouses named—substance, quantity, quality, respect, doing, suffering, where, when, placing, having—are the categories of Aristotle but Lever never actually calls them that. However, he is aware of the generic meaning of the term *category*, a "crying out" against the subject, and in trying to preserve it, he refers to these ten places as "ten demaunders." Here the confusion between the places and the categories (quite distinct concepts in Aristotle) becomes explicit and unmistakable. To these are added the forecommers, aftercommers, withcommers, lykelyer, unlikely, alike, similitude, witnesses, gaynsettes, differing termes, division, portion. Although Lever manages to comprise most of the intrinsic and extrinsic places in his topics, he makes no effort to identify them.[48]

Dudley Fenner, who follows Ramus in his definitions of logic, art, and rhetoric (*The Artes of Logike and Rhetorike*, 1584), gives a strange combination to the topics he discussed under invention. He mentions as places, disagreeable arguments, compared arguments; then he expands them into quantity or quality, equal or unequal, greater, lesser, thus including some of Aristotle's categories and some of his commonplace arguments. Other arguments he names under reasoning as artificial, less artificial, then adds division, distribution, definition—some of Cicero's intrinsic places. Finally, testimony is added as an extrinsic argument.[49] Fenner, like most of his contemporaries, stressed the necessity of order in the art of

47. Lever, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
49. Dudley Fenner, *The Artes of Logike and Rhetorike* . . . (1584), fol. Bii v.

reasoning; the easiest rules are to be learned first, then the harder, until the perfect way of learning anything is fully set down.

The places of invention which Nicholas Caussin calls "reclusi" in his work on sacred and human eloquence, 1619, are as varied and numerous as the studies in a humanistic approach to wisdom. Some of his topics are history, fables, parables, emblems, the testimony of the ancients, grave and sententious sayings, law, and sacred literature. Although these places are in keeping with Renaissance custom, the division of the logical places which Caussin makes is somewhat different from the classical tradition. The topics, considered as marks and seats of arguments, are divided into internal and external places. The *internal* are comparable to those of Cicero: definition, genus, difference, species, enumeration of the principal parts, and conjugates. The *external*—generally restricted to testimony and the authority of witnesses and not invented—are a continuation of the regular intrinsic: final, efficient, and effective cause, etymology, adjunct, contrary, repugnant, similar, comparison, and relative. Caussin thinks of these latter places as being outside a cause, or external, a new interpretation, while the internal ones are inherent in the substance of the cause.[50]

When Blundeville classifies the places, he distinguishes between those of the ordinary dialectician and those of the schoolmen. In the first division the places are twofold, "the one of persons, the other of things," and in the second, that is, according to the schoolmen, they are also of two kinds, "the one called Maxim, and the other difference of Maxim."

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50. Nicholas Caussin, *Eloquentiae sacrae et humanae parallela libri XVI*, . . . (Parisiis, 1619), p. 138.

The table of places which Blundeville gives according to his division of persons and things is quite detailed and inclusive:

Persons: name, stocke, birth, nation, sex, age, education, habit of body, affections of the minde, state, calling or condition of life, diet, study, exercise, acts done, death, wonders chansing before death, or after death, monuments left of things done, or written, and kinde of funerals showing how well or evill the person was beloved

Things: Artificiall and inartificiall places

Artificiall:

1. *Inward*—definition, description, interpretation, matter, form, general kind, special kind, difference, the whole and parts, principal (this has to do with substance)

   generation, corruption, use, abuse, subject, adjacent, apposition, common accidents, signs and circumstances as time, place, mean (accompanying substance)

2. *Outward*—efficient cause, effect, end, four opposites (relative, contrary, privatives, contradictions)

   differences, comparison, like or unlike, example, proportion, disproportion, translation or figurative speech, changed proportion and disproportion

3. *Mean*—conjugates, cases, division

Inartificiall:

fore-judgments, rumors, torments, writings, oaths, witnesses (all comprehended under place of authority) [51]

Evidently Blundeville has in mind Quintilian who draws his arguments from persons and things, but while Quin-

51. Blundeville, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

tilian separates his topics of *Things* into action, places, and other proofs,[52] Blundeville makes the division of inward, outward, and mean. A comparison might be made, likewise, with the places of Caussin who lists as "external" approximately the same topics which Blundeville names as "outward." Both men agree in designating as adjuncts those places which are not closely related to the nature of the subject. However, Blundeville is more of the classical imitator than Caussin; he retains the original inartificial arguments under the place of authority, and includes in his places practically all of those mentioned by Cicero, besides the categories of Aristotle.

The *Maxims* into which the schoolmen divide the places, according to Blundeville, are defined similarly to the maxims in Aristotle's *Topics:*

> (A Maxim) It is a generall rule approved and received of all Logicians, in such sort as no man will deny the same, as of contrarie things there must needs bee contrarie consequents. Againe, Whatsoever agreeth also with the thing defined, agreeth also with the Definition of the same: and such like.

The difference of Maxims, which is the second kind of place, is "the proper name of every Place whereby one Maxim is knowne from another, and to what place every Maxim belongeth, as from the contrary, from the Definition, from the thing defined: for by these names and such like, wee know to what place every Maxim belongeth." [53] Blundeville conceives of these maxims as serving as "shoore-ankers, and as places of refuge, when the adver-

52. Quintilian *Inst.* v. 10. 24-30.
53. Blundeville, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

sarie shall deny our Conclusion." In the *Topics* of Aristotle the maxim is considered as part of an enthymeme and as a "statement of a general kind about courses of practical conduct to be chosen or avoided." Aristotle gave great weight to the use of maxims and, in his *Rhetoric,* places them with the commonplaces or, as he calls them, the arguments common to all oratory—possible and impossible, past fact and future fact, greater or less enthymeme (maxim), and example. It was the ethical nature of the maxim which made it so effective in the oration because, as Aristotle expressed it, those who lack intelligence "love to hear him [the orator] succeed in expressing as a universal truth the opinions which they themselves hold about particular cases." In addition to the moral character with which the maxim invested the speech, it also proved useful in demonstration, because of its relation to the syllogism, that is, in joining compatible propositions, and in refutation when incompatible propositions were used.[54]

If one compares Blundeville's notion of the maxim with Aristotle's, the only point of similarity seems to be in the "generall rule" approved by all logicians. The ethical implications are not apparent and the validity of the maxim rests upon its consequents—"of contrarie things there must needs bee contrarie consequents. . . . Whatsoever agreeth with the thing defined, agreeth also with the Definition of the same"—while it is classified, not in a general way, but according to particular places such as definition, contrary, relation.[55] Again we are in the presence of a typical Renaissance problem in which a kind of dialogical situation is present in which man de-

54. Aristotle *Rhetorica* ii. 21. 1394 ^{b}-1395 ^{b}.
55. Blundeville, *op. cit.*

sires to maintain communication with the past and at the same time attempts to remain conversant with the contemporary world about him.

Throughout the Renaissance there was evident a dissatisfaction with the doctrine of the places as taught by the classical tradition. There had always been confusion in the number, the name, and the purpose of the various topics from their earliest history in Greece. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a diversity of opinion arose; some men were making efforts to simplify the number of the places (Peter Ramus and his followers) while others, preferably the humanists, were protracting their number to "infinity" in their commonplace collections. In the presence of this confusion and dissatisfaction, what was it that kept the doctrine of the places alive and made it continue as the most important ally of the orator? The very nature of the commonplace method, the mental process of resorting to topical "places" (an easily accessible idea) for a method of communication made it readily available to anyone who had enough ambition to make an orderly collection of places and to learn the sequence in which they might follow in the composing of a speech of any kind. For the ordinary Renaissance man such a method had little psychological relevance to serious intellectual activity—although given a generous natural *ingenium,* it could in spite of its conventional form produce such a man as Shakespeare.

The apparent simplicity of the commonplace doctrine with its use of the topics made it confusing to the Renaissance student who sought to apply it to every conceivable subject and in every kind of discourse. The classical theory which appeared in the several definitions of the *locus communis* had little real meaning except for the vocabulary it provided. This is apparent in the discussion

of the classification of the dialectical places. The words *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* for the designation of the kinds of topics found in the Roman orators are used by most of the Renaissance rhetoricians. However, the places listed under them are a confused aggregation of classical and humanistic "subject topics," of the intrinsic and extrinsic or analytic topics, or a complete departure from the original notion about these classifications. The categories of Aristotle and his commonplace topics, the topics of Cicero, and any and all of the "subject" topics from the arts popular in the Renaissance are all grouped in the same storehouse of arguments with little if any distinction. There is a kind of double vision at work here. The Renaissance rhetorician keeps one eye, as it were, on the texts of classical rhetoric and the topics, and the other on the contemporary culture in which he is living. As a result, his vision blurs and the distinct outlines of the places disappear in favor of a kind of protean evasiveness which is neither classical nor Renaissance.

2. THE RHETORICAL PLACES

The rhetorical places are concerned primarily with the oratorical aspect of the commonplace and its use as a little oration or as a "speech-within-a-speech." Since oratory depends upon persuasive arguments and pleasing delivery for its effectiveness, the "oratorical" commonplace will be described in a rhetorical background. The concept of the commonplace as an oration in itself or as a little speech inserted into a larger one implies that there must be some relation with the divisions of a speech, such as the proposition, reasons, proof, embellishment, and conclusion, and with the larger oration which the "oratorical" commonplace is to embellish and make effective. Traditionally,

the rhetorical places were applied chiefly to the amplification of virtue or vice in a judicial case; in this situation the places had need of the copious invention and stylistic adornment which rhetoric supplied. In other words, the orator sought for wisdom and eloquence. These several notions surrounding the commonplace in its oratorical, and necessarily, rhetorical background will provide the various themes to be discussed in the explanation of the Renaissance theories of the rhetorical places.

Before beginning the exploration of the commonplace as a "speech-within-a-speech" and as an integral part of the virtue-vice tradition, some idea must be presented concerning the Renaissance conception of rhetoric. With the advent of the new learning, stressing the attainment of wisdom and eloquence, the study of rhetoric, through which wisdom and eloquence were learned, became more invigorated and, as Cox expressed it, "All who are desirous of being regarded in any commonalty should be instructed in this art." [56] The wisdom and eloquence of rhetoric which were the objectives of a true Renaissance humanist were also the objectives of a perfect orator. Thus both the humanist and the orator would rely on rhetorical training for the achievement of their respective ideals.

Rhetoric was a part of that practical wisdom which instructed man how to write and speak effectively, how to teach, convince, and arouse, and this was the art which the Renaissance education magnified. The body of knowledge to which the Renaissance student fell heir was bound up in the formalities of traditional methodology, and access to this knowledge came through the topics which were the points of contact between ancient learning and contemporary experience. A study of rhetoric, then, en-

56. Cox, *op. cit.*, fol. Aiiii^{r}.

tailed emphasis on invention or the discovery of "seats of arguments," and on elocution with its devices of style.

In the Renaissance, rhetoric was defined as the art of speaking well and was treated for the most part in two ways, according to the classical tradition with its five divisions and according to the Ramist theory with its two divisions. Such rhetoricians as Erasmus, Cox, Melanchthon, and Wilson retained the ancient concept of rhetoric with its invention, disposition, memory, elocution, and pronunciation. Talon, Fenner, Harvey, and Fraunce followed the Ramist theory of rhetoric with its two parts, elocution and pronunciation.[57] The influence of Ramus had transferred invention, formerly the first part of the fivefold division of rhetoric, to logic, and rhetoric was abandoned to a domain of style. (Pronunciation was virtually never treated at any length in a work of rhetoric, and often not at all, even by Ramus and his followers. Memory was practically ignored.)

The Renaissance attitude towards rhetoric led to a closer relationship between the two arts of logic and rhetoric. The Ramists had, with the separation of invention from rhetoric, left only elocution and pronunciation to this art which meant undue emphasis on style. The classicists also, even though they considered invention as a part of rhetoric, stressed style. Thus in both instances, rhetoric embellished and adorned. Consequently, the places of logic must be sought for "instruction of the intellect" as Vossius expresses it. Most of the treatises on rhetoric included the figures of embellishment, properly

57. There were such major figures as Keckermann and Alsted who were followers in part of Ramus and in part of Aristotle. They assigned invention to logic but at the same time retained it for rhetoric as one of the arts common to the orator. Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England,* 1500-1700 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 312-13.

belonging to rhetoric, and the figures of thought, properly attributed to dialectic or logic. Thomas Wilson, in *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), assigns plain words which the audience can understand to the logician while the orator, he says, "must chere his geastes" with things wittily devised and pleasantly set forth. The places of logic are those which assist in proving a cause and seeking the truth—definition, cause, parts, effects, adjuncts, and contraries. The places of rhetoric provide the topics of circumstances commonly used in praise of a person, deed, or thing, and any other matter appropriate for amplifying and beautifying a cause.[58] There were others who proclaimed the same doctrine as Wilson, such as Gabriel Harvey who pointed out in his *Ciceronianus:*

> The ornaments of tropes and the embellishments of figures, without indicating the stores of arguments, the quantities of proofs, and the structural framework, seems to me tantamount to displaying a body that is surpassingly beautiful and lovely but deprived of sense and life.[59]

Harvey would have rhetoric the expositor of the oratorical adornment, and dialectic, the expositor of invention and disposition. Melanchthon gives the bare essentials to dialectic and the addition of eloquence to rhetoric. Vossius leaves the instruction of the intellect to dialectic and the moving of the will to rhetoric. All express the same doctrine that dialectic instructs and rhetoric delights and moves.

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58. Thomas Wilson, *Wilson's Arte of Rhetorique,* 1560, ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1909 [1st ed.: 1553]), pp. 2-3 and 23.

59. Gabriel Harvey, *Gabriel Harvey's Ciceronianus,* introd. Harold Wilson ("University of Nebraska Studies"; Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska, 1945), p. 87.

Such definitions of the purposes of these two arts of communication indicate that rhetoric and dialectic were thought of by many as distinctly separate in their application. Furthermore, the Renaissance acceptance, at least in the studies on rhetoric, of Zeno's explanation of the "closed-fist" and "open-palm" relationship existing between the two arts seems to imply the same notion. There was, however, also a contrary tendency. Rhetoric and dialectic were also thought of as interdependent in their relation with oratory. Proof of this is found in the various treatises on the tropes and figures of style in which, even though the emphasis is overwhelmingly on stylistic devices or rhetorical places, the figures of thought are also prominent. These figures of thought include what would properly be called dialectical places—*sententia, chria,* proverb, definition, etymology, and division. In fact, most treatises on rhetoric include both the rhetorical and the dialectical places.

Association of the commonplace with virtue and vice.— A quick flash-back over the history of the commonplace, given in the previous chapters, will recall that the commonplace, whether considered as a single argument (an "analytic" topic), a locale of arguments ("subject" topic), or a storehouse of arguments, was related to the amplification of virtue or vice and was used for embellishing an oration and moving the audience. Aphthonius develops these various aspects of the commonplace in his themes for school exercises. Aristotle provides for them in his *Topics* and *Rhetoric.* Cicero discusses the "commonplace which embellishes" in his works on the *Topics* and on oratory, and Quintilian includes them in the *Institutio oratoria.* These were the writers most popularly read and imitated in the Renaissance; consequently, the definition of the commonplace which developed from the study of

rhetoric, and of oratory, was very similar to the traditional one.

At least fifteen or twenty such definitions could easily be found in the works of rhetoric produced in the Renaissance and in the records of the grammar schools and universities. A few such examples will illustrate the common factor present in all of them:

> The commonplace is the more powerful speech and an oration exalted about something which is outside the cause but adjunct to it.[60]
>
> The commonplace is an oration by which a deed upon which the case rests is increased either of praise or blame.[61]
>
> The commonplace is similar to the conclusion which we call the amplified speech of the good and evil which are within someone.[62]
>
> The commonplace is an amplified discourse of the good and evil within someone.[63]
>
> The commonplace is a speech in which good or evil which is present in some thing is amplified.[64]

Although the definition of the *locus communis* as an oration is more explicit in the Latin texts, the rhetoricians writing in English also thought of the *locus communis* as

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60. "Vocant . . . locum communem, . . . orationem quasi elatam de aliqua re extra caussam, sed quae caussae adiuncta." Camerarius, *Elementa rhetoricae,* pp. 336-37.

61. "Locus est oratio, quae augetur factum de quo constat, sive delicti, seu praeclari facinoris." Camerarius, *Theonis sophistae,* p. 314.

62. "Ergo conclusioni similis est locus communis, quem item bonorum et malorum, quae alicui insunt, nos amplificativum sermonem appellamus." Aphthonius, *op. cit.* [1565 ed.], p. 97.

63. "Locus communis est oratio, bona aut mala, quem alicui insunt, augmentens." *Ibid.,* 1659 ed., p. 156.

64. "Locus communis est oratio in qua bona vel mala, quae alicui rei insunt, amplificantur." Charles Pajot, *Tyrocinium eloquentiae, sive rhetorica nova, et facilior, . . .* (Secunda editio; Blesis, 1648), p. 260.

an oratorical means for amplification in terms of virtue and vice.

The association of the *locus communis* with virtue and vice is peculiarly significant. Aphthonius was very careful to distinguish between the *locus communis* and the other themes which he defined as orations. The *sententia,* the chria, *laus* and *vituperatio,* and the *narratio* each had its particular purpose; it was only the commonplace which amplified virtue or vice as an abstract, impersonal theme. The whole procedure which Aphthonius describes for expanding the commonplace as a speech to be used within another speech centers around the praise of virtue or the dispraise of vice:

> In the first place, from the contrary, then the exposition of the matter, not as though you are teaching, for the matter has already been examined, but as if you were spurring on the listener, or irritating him. After this, you will add comparison, by which topic you will bring greater blame to that which is being tried. Afterwards you will bring out a *sententia,* or you will find fault with the motive, as the topic is called, or the intention of the one who has performed the deed. Then in a conjectural digression you will bring suspicion to bear on the past life of the criminal; next, a rejection of mercy. At the conclusion of this exercise you will put the final topics: lawful, just, useful, possible, honest, and imminent.[65]

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65. "Primus ex contrario, hinc rei expositionem, non tamquam doceas, res enim nota est, sed ut auditorem incites, aut exasperes. Post hac afferes comparationem, qua ex collatione id, de quo agitur, in maius extollas. Postmodum collocabis sententiam, vel mentem, caput sic vocatum, exprobas, aut calumnians agentis intentionem. Deinde coniecturali digressione vitam praeteritam, in criminum suspicionem devocabis, deinde, misericordiae exclusionem. In fine autem huius prae exercitationis, pones capita finalia: legitimum, iustum, utile, possibile, honestum, eventurum." Aphthonius, *op. cit.,* p. 92.

The completed exercise had only one purpose, to extol the virtue or to depreciate the vice affected by the cause being pleaded.

The virtue-or-vice focus of the commonplace remained constant and sharp through the Renaissance despite the somewhat blurred views of the rhetorical commonplaces. The theme of virtue and vice invaded every field of oratory, it colored all the writing, and found ready expression through sententious quotations in popular conversations. How much the influence of education in the commonplaces affected the Renaissance mentality is difficult to say. However, it is evident that the Tudor scholar and courtier thought consistently in terms of virtue and vice and, to such an extent, that nearly all the literature of the period tends to develop in the same way.

In the instruction for the education of the prince, Thomas Elyot states in *The Boke of the Governour* (1531) that the principal requirement for rulers is that they be virtuous and wise, "ornate with vertue and wisedome." [66] The primary object of every art or science to be studied is the attainment of virtue and wisdom.

Some excerpts from the "Dedicatory Epistle" accompanying Richard Rainolde's *The Foundacion of Rhetorike* illustrate the almost exaggerated stress placed on virtue:

> In the moste fortunate state is the kyngdome and Common wealthe, where the Nobles and Peres, not onelie daiely doe studie to vertue, for that is the wisedome, that all the grave and wise Philosophers searched to attaine to. For the ende of all the artes and sciences, and of all noble actes and enterprises is vertue.[67]

66. Thomas Elyot, *The Governour*, introd. Foster Watson (New York: E. P. Dutton Co., Inc.—Everyman's Library), p. 17.

67. Rainolde, *op. cit.*, "Dedicatory Epistle," fol. aiiii.

In the address to the Reader, he says:

> I have chosen out in these Oracions soche questions, as are right necessarie to be knowen and redde of all those, whose cogitacion pondereth vertue and Godlines.

In praise of Aesop's *Fables:*

> The wittes of our auncestours were incensed to invent these thynges . . . the arts and sciences whose end is vertue.[68]

The necessity of possessing virtue is very pertinently set forth by Robert Johnson in the first essay in his collection *Essaies on Rather Imperfect Offers:*

> *Of Greatnes of minde.* Greatnesse of minde is an ornament to vertue, setting it foorth in an higher degree of excellencie, teaching us to contemn all these imaginate worldly greatnesses, and confirming us with a puissant resolution to enter upon the bravest enterprises; where this aptnesse is wanting, the vertues which specially befit great fortunes (as depth of wisedome, height of courage and liberality) are also wanting, and it is impossible to enlarge a little minde to anie of these vertues. . . . So this Greatnesse of mind, if it be not accompanied with vertue, maketh men daungerously bad and terrible, producing the same effectes, which it did in Catiline.[69]

In the same work, Johnson associates virtue with learning:

> For knowledge teacheth not her owne use, but as a necessary meane inableth us for good actions, and it ought to

68. *Ibid.*

69. Robert Johnson, *Essaies on Rather Imperfect Offers,* introd. Robert H. Bowers (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1955 [1st ed.: 1607]), fol. B4 r-v.

be measured by vertue. . . . Some men object that howsoever this refiner of invention (Learning) is commendable in lower fortunes, yet in great men it is an occasion of more intollerable vices: . . . al reasons either of praise or dispraise ought to be taken from the right use, to which a thing is directed.[70]

The display of virtue and vice was effected through the eloquence of the speaker according to the classical tradition which favored the oration as the primary method of communication. The oration as it was understood and practiced in classical times with the deliberative, demonstrative, and judicial causes, and its location in an oral tradition, was not practically adaptable to contemporary life in Elizabethan England. Yet, the training in the grammar schools and universities with its grammar, logic, rhetoric, and accompanying exercises, was constantly directed to the eloquence of the orator, and, indeed, of the Latin-speaking orator. But, paradoxically, the eloquence which pointed in theory to oratory was more often expressed in written literary productions than in oral communication.

The locus communis *and oratorical eloquence.*—The association of wisdom and eloquence and their dependence on the places are stressed again and again in the Renaissance conception of the perfect orator and frequently influence the choice of places to be used in acquiring such skill. Theoretically, the orator must be the perfect humanist in the quantity of his knowledge, and the skilled speaker in his quality of style.

An orator must have knowledge of all things if he would be effective. Elyot admonishes him:

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70. *Ibid.*, fol. C4ᵛ.

> And bicause there may be nothynge but it may happen to come in praise or dispraise, in consultation or iugement, in accusation or defence: therefore an oratour, by others instruction perfectly furnisshed, may, in every matter and lernynge, commende or dispraise, exhorte, or dissuade, accuse or defende eloquently, as occasion hapneth.[71]

Elyot combines wisdom and eloquence with the praise or dispraise in the commonplace which refers principally to the judicial oration. This is consistent with his opinion that the men who bore the title of eloquence in his day were the lawyers who qualified as orators because of their encyclopedic knowledge.

For Leonard Cox training in oratory included the skillful use of the parts of rhetoric:

> Who somever desyreth to be a good Oratour or to dyspute and commune of any manner of thynge, hym behoveth to have foure thyngs. The fyrst is called Invencion for he must fyrst of all imagin or invent in his mynde what he shall say. The seconde is named Iugement. Fore he must have wyt to deserne and iuge whether the thynges that he hath founde in his mynde be convenient to the purpose or not. For oftentymes yf a man lacke this property he may as well tell that that is against hym as with hym as experience doth dayly shew. The thyrde is Disposicion wherby he may know how to order and set every thynge in his due place lest thoughe his invencion and iugement be never so good he may happen to be counted (as the common proverbe sayth) to put the carte afore the horse. The fourth and last is suche thynges as he hath invented: and by Iugement knowen apte to his purpose whan they are set in theyr order so to speke them that it may be pleasaunt and delectable to the audience so that

71. Elyot, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

it may be sayd of hym that hystories make mencion that an olde woman sayd ones . . . 'This is he.' And this last property is called among lerned men Eloquence.[72]

This mental versatility which the orator was expected to possess was to be sublimated by his eloquence which would enable him to gain control over the emotions and will of his audience.

Quintilian, whom the Renaissance man admired and imitated, expresses the ultimate objective to be acquired by such training:

Then there are the commonplaces, which as we know, have often been written by orators as a form of exercise. The man who has practised himself in giving full treatment to such simple and uncomplicated themes, will assuredly find his fluency increased in those subjects which admit of varied digression, and will be prepared to deal with any case that may confront him, since all cases ultimately turn upon general question.[73]

Erasmus is evidently thinking of such eloquence when in the *De copia* (1511) he advises the boys:

It will be necessary for him who would train himself for eloquence to take out individual places and, as it were, beat them from door to door, to see if he is able to find anything in them; their use will be more effective as they occur to him spontaneously.[74]

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72. Cox, *op. cit.*, fol. Aiiii.

73. Quintilian *Inst.* x. 5. 11-14.

74. "Oportebit autem eum qui semet exercet ad eloquentiam, singulos excutere locos, ac velut ostiatim pulsare, si quid possit elici: usus efficiet ut deinceps sponte occurrant." Desiderii Erasmi, *Opera omnia* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1703), Vol. I, *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum,* Lib. II, p. 89.

The more abundant the places which were collected, the more learned the student appeared to be, provided, of course, that the places flowed forth spontaneously and smoothly and were not thrown in as a piece of foreign debris.

In the *Treatise of Figures of Grammar and Rhetorike,* Richard Sherry refers to elegant thoughts, *sententiae,* and choice words as a "flood of eloquence" which must not only be used but likewise collected. Carbone, too, devotes the first chapter of his work on oratory, *De elocutione oratoria* (1592), to eloquence and makes all the force of the speech, all amplifying and embellishing, depend on the flow of the commonplaces:

> No one will be able to adorn a speech who does not have a richness of things and who has not carefully investigated all the places, as I said, since all the means to be used in amplifying a true fact come forth from the same places, as if from certain fonts.[75]

A figurative conception of this eloquence was expressed in the metaphorical flowing of water from a river or font. Peacham in the *Garden of Eloquence* describes the four places of amplification: distribution, description, comparison, and expansion (congeries), in this manner:

> The fower mighty and plentifull streams of copious eloquence which are continually fed and filled with the perpetuall and pleasant springs of mans wit: I meane those figures and formes of speech which the reason of

75. ". . . neminem posse orationem locupletare, qui rerum locuples non fuerit, et qui omnes locos, ut dicebam, omnino perspectos non habuerit, cum re vera omnes dilatandi rationes ex ipsis locis, quasi ex quibusdam fontibus, emenent." Ludovicus Carbone, *De elocutione oratoria libri iiii. . . .* (Venetiis, 1592), pp. 967-69.

> man, the principall part and power of his minde, hath by long and diligent search found out, to the admirable utterance of his knowledge, and the glory of his wisedome.[76]

This flow of eloquence corresponds with the insistence on the memorization of the places so that the orator might proceed with the simple topic or theme from one argument to another without hesitation, thus building a mighty torrent of words which would sweep away all contrary opinions. This explains, too, the emphasis on the ability to make an extemporaneous speech, and perhaps, to some extent, it explains the popularity of sonnet-making.

A glance into the grammar school where the little boys were reciting moral distichs, proverbs, and *sententiae* of many kinds, to be memorized for use in the expansion of their simple theme exercises, explains the facility of the Renaissance orator for slipping such sayings into his speech in order to embellish and dignify it. Such ability and skill added to a man's reputation for eloquence and marked him as having an ethical character. (Aristotle warned that maxims should be used only by mature men whose virtue had been proved by experience.)

Oratorical eloquence, then, according to the testimony of the Renaissance instructors, depends in large part on the skillful adaptation of the commonplaces in the sense of little orations or snippets of oratorical material with their store of humanistic learning and devices of adornment. The essential function of this eloquence was to enhance and make more persuasive its didactic message, and its most common locality was the oration.

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76. Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (2d ed., 1593 [1st ed.: 1577]), introd. William G. Crane (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1954), pp. 119-20.

Now that the relationship of the commonplace with virtue and vice and oratorical eloquence, as it appeared in the rhetorical background of the Renaissance, has been established, the commonplace must now be examined with respect to its function in the different kinds of orations, each of which had its particular topics and purposes. For example, if the oratorical commonplace was used in a judicial speech, its function would be to extol virtue and demand punishment for vice, or, in the case of the defendant, to make a plea for mercy; all of its eloquence would be directed to moving the judges. On the other hand, if the oration were of the demonstrative kind, the *locus communis* would be directed to the people in the form of a panegyric or ceremonial speech.

The commonplace and three kinds of orations.— Aristotle divided orations into three kinds according to their audience and purpose. The deliberative or political oration was addressed to the members of the assembly and its purpose was the persuasion to some future good. The forensic speech was for a more restricted audience, the jurymen, and its particular objective was to win the favor of the judge. The epideictic or ceremonial oration was directed to the *populares* and was little more than an oratorical declamation praising or dispraising someone.[77]

Aphthonius made corresponding divisions but, in addition, he assigned certain themes from his *Progymnasmata* to each oration. Such a classification was more directly pertinent to the Renaissance rhetoricians because the exercises of the *Progymnasmata* were well worn by every schoolboy. Aphthonius's divisions were:

Deliberativi: fabula, narratio, chria, sententia, thesis

77. Aristotle *Rhetorica* ii. 18. 1391 b.

Iudicialis: confirmatio, confutatio, locus communis
Demonstrativi: laus, vituperatio, imitatio, comparatio [78]

Aphthonius makes here a clear distinction between the *locus communis* with its judicial background and *laus* and *vituperatio* which were used for occasions of ceremonial display. This points up the essential difference between the two "places" which both treat of praise and blame. The *locus communis* amplifies the *abstract virtue or vice* embodied in a person or deed while the *laus* and *vituperatio* direct the praise of virtue or dispraise of vice to a *particular person or deed.* The former, consequently, is of an objective, universal character, the latter, subjective and personal. Aphthonius retains the basic idea of "common" in his definition of the *locus communis* as the amplification of virtue or vice; but it is transmuted from subject to person in its application (a moving from the thesis to the hypothesis in the judicial case) as contrasted with *laus* and *vituperatio* which are basically "personal" and subjective. The topics of invention appropriated to these themes will be, in like manner, either general or particular in their scope. For the *locus communis,* the artificial places and sententious maxims will be brought in, for *laus* and *vituperatio,* the places of circumstances.

The association of the *locus communis* with the judicial cause from its very origin explains the recurring idea that the commonplace was an appeal to the judges for pardon or conviction. The four topics of Aristotle which he named "common topics" in a strict sense, that is, possible and impossible, greater or less, magnify or minimize, past fact and future fact, could easily be adapted to a judicial speech. Quintilian also thought of the commonplace as having something of the nature of a court speech:

78. Aphthonius, *op. cit.,* fol. A5 r.

> As to commonplaces, (I refer to those in which we denounce vices themselves such as adultery, gambling or profligacy without attacking particular persons) they come straight from the courts and, if we add the name of the defendant, amount to actual accusations.[79]

The same notion remained in the Renaissance. There is at least a shadowy concept of the *locus communis* as being of a judicial nature in its definitions as a second speech similar to the epilog and as an oration brought in from outside the cause but adjunct to it. However, the Renaissance did not restrict the commonplace to the judicial cause. For rhetoricians of this period, oratory included three kinds of speeches—the deliberative, demonstrative, and judicial—and the commonplace could be brought in for embellishment in any one of them.

Melanchthon devotes a large portion of his works on rhetoric to a discussion of these three causes in a more or less confusing manner. The *deliberative* speech or the "suasoriae matters" and the *forensic* were to be treated by rhetoric, the art of communication which moved and impelled men's minds and led them to action. All other questions by which men were taught were left to dialectic. By way of example, Melanchthon adds that when we dispute about the nature of virtue, dialectic will be consulted as to what virtue may be, what causes and parts it has, and what effects it shows. But when we exhort men to the cultivation of virtue, the rhetorical places will be followed. Since the suasive orations lead to action, the Psalms which either give precepts, console, or deprecate—these things persuade to action—will be places of the deliberative kind.[80]

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79. Quintilian *Inst.* ii. 4. 23.
80. Melanchthon, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

The deliberative kind of oration is explained by Melanchthon as treating a speech in suasion and dissuasion, exhorting and admonishing, seeking and praying, consoling and similar things, and the end is not knowledge but action. The places of arguments to be used are honesty, utility, and ease, which come from the dialectical places of definition and causes. Melanchthon is here confusing the "places." Previously he stated that when one would exhort men or try to move them to action, when one delivers a deliberative speech, the rhetorical places are to be used. Now he mentions the "places" belonging to the deliberative speech as dialectical—honesty, utility, and ease. And these are the same topics which Aphthonius assigns to the *locus communis* and the forensic cause.

According to Melanchthon's first division, the demonstrative oration rightly belongs to the dialectician. But later, Melanchthon assigns to the demonstrative speech the places of circumstances for praising a person, place, or thing, following closely the classical lists for these, such as country, sex, birth, talent, education, character, goods of fortune, and the like. The Psalms are placed among the topics, especially those which describe the person of Christ. All of these places, according to Melanchthon, should be dialectical, since they serve the demonstrative cause, but, in reality, they belong more to the rhetorical.[81]

The discussion of the orations remains basically rather simple in Leonard Cox's *Rhetorik*. The demonstrative is used in praise or dispraise, and in common actions. (He is evidently thinking of the oration of this kind as one of display and suited for the *populares.)* The deliberative speech he defines as "one by which we persuade or dissuade any thyng and by the whiche we aske or whereby we

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

exhort any man to do a thynge or els to forsake it and this kynde of oracion is moche in use not onely in civil maters but also in epistels." [82] The judicial kind is appropriated to legal controversies and to judges, an oration which "in olde tyme longed onely to Judges and men of law but now for the more parte it is neglecte of them." [83]

Although the definitions of these three causes follow classical teaching, the places allied with the causes become confused and indefinite as Cox discusses them. He classifies the places or topics according to the divisions of a speech—preamble, narration, confirmation, confutation. For example, in the demonstrative oration Cox names the places from which the preamble is taken: "Benevolence is the place whereby the herer is made willyng to here us and it is conteyned in the thynge that we speke of in them whom we speke to and in our owne persone." In this statement Cox seems to be thinking of benevolence as the "topic" or "mark" designating a seat of arguments; yet, if one reads further that "the most used places of benevolence are *office,* or *duty* of the person, and the *nature* of time and place," he concludes that benevolence is not really a topic but the "place whereby the herer is made willyng to hear us," that is, the "circumstances"—regarded as rhetorical topics—under which the speech may be delivered. Cox is surely dallying with the idea of the *locus communis* as a topic or heading and as a storehouse for the "contents" which the topic indicates.

Cox calls the places from which the praise of a person is developed the "Places from which Narration is taken." These are listed as birth, childhood, adolescence, man's state, old age, death and what follows. After the places used in expanding the preamble and narration are

82. Cox, *op. cit.,* fol. Dii r.
83. *Ibid.*

described, Cox proceeds with the "Places of contention" —honesty, profit, lightness or hardiness of the deed, and "Places of confutation."

In the deliberative cause the places are the same as for the demonstrative; under judicial cause, Cox lists:

> Sentence—"Out of the narracion must be gatheryd a briefe sentence, wherein shall stande the hole pithe of the cause."
> Confirmation—will (quality and cause) and power Example [84]

Cox adds by way of explanation that in juridical cases the places of confirmation are nature, law, custom, equity, judgment, necessity, bargain or covenant.

Richard Sherry is another of the rhetoricians whose multifarious ideas scattered throughout the pages of his works assemble themselves in disorderly "congeries" instead of in well-organized lines. Like Melanchthon, Sherry desires to include multiple concepts of a topic into one small section. In *Schemes and Tropes* he lists the places of invention which are to be used for discovering circumstances and sentences and those to be used for exaggeration. Since these places have already been given, in Section 1, on *Dialectical Places,* they will be presented here only in summary form and in relation to the three kinds of orations:

> Commonplaces—are so called because they entreat of both parts
> Sentences—may be connected with commonplace arguments to argue that a thing is good and to amplify virtue or exaggerate vice

84. *Ibid.,* fol. Bii ᵛ.

Places—are seats of arguments applied to three causes with particular application:

"As in the kind suasorie, honest, profitable, pleasaunt, easye, necessarie

In demonstrative kynde: kynred, contrey, goodes of the bodye, and of the mynde

In the judiciall kynde, inespecial deniall, those that we spoke of even now"

General—declare what belongs to every thing, common to orators with logicians, and profit much for judgment and indicting [85]

The four kinds of places which Sherry discusses are listed under the general heading of "amplification" and the particular heading of "circumstances." He refers to all as commonplaces . . . "that indifferentlye apperteyne to all kyndes and partes of causes, of whyche Rodulphe (Agricola) entreateth, and Aristotle in hys Topyckes." [86] Only the first of the four kinds is titled "Commonplaces" as though the rest were somehow adjuncts to the first. Yet, in the Sentences and in the General Places the basic notion of the *locus communis* is present. However, in the Places—the seats of arguments—the commonplace becomes more of a "special" topic with application to a particular rather than a general cause. (This suggests Aristotle's "special" topics.) Sherry seems to be making an enumerated list of all he has been taught or of what he has read concerning the places of invention and he ends in a confused variety of what should have been the simple *locus communis* as a means of amplification.

When Vossius undertook the task of writing his books on rhetoric with the classification and explanation of the

85. Sherry, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

places, he was caught in the same morass of confused theorizing which hindered the progress of other rhetoricians. He first begins by combining the commonplaces which Aristotle had named with the three kinds of orations. The arguments are to be sought from the places which are the seats and heads of arguments and these places are divided into general and special—the general are the domiciles of propositions common to all kinds of causes, and the special, the seats of arguments appropriate to particular kinds.

Vossius describes the general places as being of two kinds: (1) possible and impossible, which is established either by *persuasio* or *dissuasio,* praise or vituperation, accusation or defense—in other words, by the three kinds of causes, and (2) great or small, which pertains to the place of comparison and is shown to be "more useful or less useful, more honest or dishonest, more just and unjust" ("utilius vel inutilius, honestius vel inhonestius, aequius vel iniquius"). The particular arguments, which Vossius restricts to the places of oratory, furnish only persuadable arguments.

The dialectical places are universal and demonstrate probable arguments, such as cause, effect, definition, division, opposite. (These are similar to the "analytic" topic.) The rhetorical places are both common and particular. Vossius explains this by stating that some of the rhetorical places are *loci communes* because they are from the three kinds of causes and are "general" *domicilia* of propositions while others are *loci proprii* because they pertain to "each" kind *(cui generi)* or to forms and species which are seats of propositions in this or that form of speaking. Vossius's confusion is very similar to the dilemma of Sherry who was trying to reconcile the commonplace with

all orations and yet restrict it to a particular application in a special kind.

Vossius makes a very lengthy and detailed exposition of the three orations which includes their function, the places to be explored, the emotions to be evoked, the time, and the audience. In brief, these orations seem to include every phase of oratory:

Deliberative—persuade or dissuade; useful; hope and fear; future time; the audience, senators
Demonstrative—praise or blame; honesty; delight; present time; the audience, the *populares*
Judicial—accuse or defend; justice; clemency and sweetness; past time; the audience, the judges [87]

Much more could be said about Vossius and his voluminous pages on rhetoric and dialectic, but it would only be a new repetition of what has already been written and a new exposition of his encyclopedic mind.

How did such a profuse body of doctrine relating to the commonplaces and oratory fit into the Renaissance pattern of communication? Were these rhetoricians whose works have been studied—Melanchthon, Cox, Sherry, and Vossius—assured of the necessity of such instruction in their contemporary situation? To answer the first question it is necessary to recall that the academic arts—grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic—were still being taught according to the classical model with the avowed—if not always realistic—purpose of developing the perfect orator. Secondly, in this educational climate, it would be necessary, theoretically, to be acquainted with the classical models and principles for the training of the orator. But such a

87. Vossius, *Gerardi Joannis Vossii de logices et rhetoricae natura et constitutione libri II* (Hagae-Comitis, 1658), pp. 13-16.

situation did not correspond to the Elizabethan world in which there was little demand for formal oratory as the classical world understood it. There was scarcely any necessity for the judicial kind of speech; the deliberative found a few practitioners. Only the demonstrative speech with its eloquent displays of rhetoric gave ample occasion for oratory. And yet, the classical theory continued as the basis for instruction with emphasis pointed to an oral form of discourse rather than a written. However, it seems apparent from Renaissance literature that the greater number of literary works produced were written, not oral, albeit in oratorical form. The dedicatory epistles, the addresses to the reader and to the literary patron, ceremonial panegyrics of every kind, all furnish lasting evidence that even the ceremonial or demonstrative speech was consigned to the written message, not the oral. These literary forms provided multiple occasions for the Renaissance orator to open the fonts and treasuries of his learning, whether they flowed from his commonplace book or from memory, and to let the flood of his eloquence amplify, embellish, and enrich his speech to the delight and persuasion of his audience.

The commonplace in the ceremonial oration.—The commonplace can no longer claim to be of a peculiarly judicial nature in a rhetorical world which favors the speech of display. Instead, it takes on a more humanistic character and becomes a necessary "place" to be used in developing the ceremonial oration. The native attraction for virtue and vice remains, but this is not the sole concern of the *locus communis* which in this new situation includes the various kinds of arts, the sciences, and the different branches of philosophy. The whole purpose of the ceremonial oration rested in the eloquence of persuasion sought for in a copious knowledge of the common-

places and in the tropes and figures of style. The Renaissance continued to think of the *locus communis* itself as an oration or kind of isolated speech, fully formed according to the traditional parts of the oration, and brought into the principal discourse for adornment and persuasion.

What did the Renaissance writer mean when he spoke of the commonplace as an oration and what classical theory did he follow in this notion? In the *Ad Herennium* an argument was called most complete and perfect when it was formed according to the divisions of a speech—proposition, reason, proof of reason, embellishment, and conclusion.[88] This concept of an argument corresponds with the Renaissance idea of the oratorical commonplace and since the topics were defined as "seats of arguments," one could easily conceive of the topics as "containing" little speeches to be used in proving a case.

A résumé of the divisions of a formal speech will illustrate the similarity between it and the commonplace oration. At the same time, the effectiveness of introducing the *locus communis* at a specific place in the speech will be shown. The elements of a speech may vary somewhat in number, but the generally accepted divisions are:

1. Introduction: the beginning of the discourse which prepares the hearer's mind
2. Narration: a statement of fact, of events that have occurred or might occur
3. Division: makes clear the matters agreed upon, those which are contested and those which are to be taken up
4. Proof: the presentation of arguments together with corroboration
5. Refutation: the destruction of the adversary's argument

88. *Ad Herennium* ii. 18. 28.

6. Conclusion: the end of the discourse; formed according to the principles of art [89]

A comparison of these six parts with those of the argument or the *locus communis* as a little speech—proposition, reason, proof, embellishment, conclusion—will show that the commonplace lacked only the introduction or, as it was more commonly called, the *exordium.*

From the time of Aphthonius, orators considered that the most fitting place for the *locus communis* (in the sense of a "speech-within-a-speech") was in the conclusion of the discourse, and frequently referred to it as being similar to the epilog or like a second speech. In other words, after the introduction, the proposition, the proof, and refutation had been made in the major speech, the commonplace would be brought in just before the conclusion. It would be developed by the statement of the proposition (which would include amplification of virtue or vice), the proofs of the proposition, the embellishment, and the highly rhetorcial conclusion. In this position the oratorical commonplace was like a last appeal to the judges, a delightful and pleasing oration which was to arouse and move the jury to a favorable decision. Since the commonplace served as a kind of concluding "speech-within-a-speech" delivered after the case had been proved, Aphthonius never thought of it as having an *exordium,* unless one was permitted for the sake of exercise in the schools.

It was in the peroration or conclusion, then, that the commonplace had unlimited possibilities for amplification and was most effective. This place in the speech was always reserved for the display of the orator's powers of eloquence and it was here that, as Quintilian expressed it:

89. *Ibid.*

> We may give full rein to our emotions, place fictitious speeches in the mouths of our characters, call the dead to life, and produce the wife or children of the accused in court.[90]

The *locus communis* as a little speech or snippet of oratorical matter was a means of embellishment, but it itself could also be the key device for embellishing the *locus communis.* It was the chief topic sought by orators because they knew that within its "seat of arguments" they might come upon a treasury of figures and tropes which would enrich their discourse. Peacham describes the purpose of amplification as teaching and relating things plainly, enlarging and proving, and concluding grandly. The matter to be used should pertain to the great, excellent, good, or notorious evil, cruel, horrible, then seek aid from the affections, desire, hatred, fear, admiration, hope, mirth, weeping, and such like. The places from which the orator would "fetch these causes," as Peacham expresses it, are "whatsoever is commendable and merits high praise or whatsoever is abominable and deserves punishment." The examples he gives of such things are noble and famous enterprises, great and worthy virtues, wicked and horrible facts, as murders, parricides, tyranny, and slaughter.[91] All through his exposition of amplification and its topics, Peacham maintains a consciousness of virtue and vice which satisfies the requirement of the *locus communis.* But he is explicitly *out* of commonplace tradition when he considers the affections (desire, hatred, fear, and so on) as places to be used for the amplification of the commonplace. He makes the *affections,* which the persuasive action of the *locus com-*

90. Quintilian *Inst.* iv. 1. 28.
91. Peacham, *op. cit.,* pp. 121-22.

munis is to move, the very topics which should produce the effect.

William Webbe in his little *laus* on John Lyly and *Euphues, A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), mentions most of the devices which can be used in the amplification of anything:

> Whose workes, surely in respecte of his singular eloquence and brave composition of apt words and sentences, let the learned examine and make tryall thereof thorough all the partes of Rhetoricke, in fitte phrases, in pithy sentences, and in gallant tropes, in flowing speeche, in plaine sence, and surely in my judgement, I think he wyll yielde him that verdict, which Quintilian giveth of bothe the best Orators Demosthenes and Tully, that from one nothing may be taken away, to the other, nothing may be added.[92]

"If anyone wishes to amplify with ease any proposition whatever, he must have learned thoroughly and investigated all the places." [93] With these words Carbone in his work on oratory admonishes his students that copiousness must be taken from the store of provisions of the places ("copia sumenda est ex locorum penu"). He separates the places of amplification into three groups: dialectical, rhetorical, and sophistic. The dialectical places are those which arise from the nature of the thing, such as definition, parts, causes, and effects. The rhetorical places are classified as *extrinsic* or forensic—prejudices, judgments, tablets, torture, witnesses, rumors, treatises—

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92. William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (London: John Chailewood, 1586), fol. Ei^{v}, in *Ancient Critical Essays upon English Poets and Poesy*, ed. Joseph Haslewood (London: T. Bensley, 1815), Vol. II.

93. "Si quis igitur quocumque propositionem facile amplificare voluerit, locos omnes penitus cognitos atque tractatos habeat." Carbone, *op. cit.*, pp. 967-69.

and *intrinsic* or artificial (which the art of rhetoric itself supplies)—praise, deliberation, judgment, and the places which are used either for moving or proving. (Carbone thinks of the artificial places as corresponding to the three kinds of orations.) The third kind of places of amplification Carbone calls *sophistic* and from these, he says, false proofs are assumed which have something of vice either in their nature or in their matter.[94] This inclusive list of topics used in expanding the commonplace gives some insight into the complexity of the Renaissance thought processes which had to have at hand, and ready for spontaneous expression, innumerable topics appropriate for any subject.

Alsted approaches the procedure of amplification from a more linguistic point of view. In the directions for assembling material for commonplace books, he specifies the books of commonplaces for eloquence as four:

Vocabulary: called lexicon or dictionary which should contain more significant words: the emphatic, rare, barbaric and obsolete, synonyms and epithets, and the more excellent tropes

Phraseology: contains more elaborate phrases, archaisms, and anomalous schemes of speaking

Gnomology: (called also anthology and *florilegium*) contains embellishments such as *sententiae* or pointed sayings, similitudes (metaphors and similes), and examples

Formulae: contains patterns for matter and relation. These are divided into

a. patterns of subject: schemata for asking, thanking, presenting efforts, and similar things

b. patterns of connectives: beginnings, narrating, proposing questions, checking, concluding; likewise of changing, continuing, breaking off, and others [95]

94. *Ibid.*

95. Alsted, *op. cit.*, Lib. II, sec. 1, pp. 19-23.

Alsted really adds very little to the traditional places for amplification, but because of his liking for an encyclopedic array of knowledge, he makes much out of little.

Another seventeenth-century writer, Francis Pomey, in his *Indiculus universalis* (1672), describes the commonplace as an oration which is nothing else but a certain dignified amplification pertaining properly to peroration. The commonplace is to be amplified through the six topics: contrary, exposition, comparison, *sententia,* digression, and exclusion of pity. These topics or headings are, in turn, bound by six others: legitimate, just, useful, easy, honest, and imminent—the same as Aphthonius's list.[96] These topics which Pomey gives are usually found under the "subject" topic *Amplification* in the manuals of style and are the ones generally listed for the development of the *locus communis.*

The topics which were invented for the amplification of the *locus communis* are only one part of the process which included as well the particular sources of embellishment or the tropes and figures of style. The numerous manuals of style with their innumerable and confusing lists of tropes and figures testify to the attraction of the Renaissance orator for decorative ornaments in his style. In these manuals, the figures of diction, and the figures of thought (these were the topics of dialectical investigation reduced to stylistic devices) were conceived of as the "places" in which one would discover ornaments for adorning his speech. The credo of Quintilian, "Figures lend credibility to our arguments and steal their way secretly into the minds of the judges," was accepted and

96. Francis Pomey, *Indiculus universalis rerum fere omnium quae in mundo sunt . . .* (Lyon, 1672), pp. 128-29.

eagerly professed by the Renaissance writer with the conviction that "there is no more effective method of exciting the emotions than an apt use of figures." [97] Scarcely a rhetoric text existed which did not give ample space to a discussion and illustration of these figures of style and many were primarily books of rhetorical figures.

The distinction which Omer Talon makes in his rhetoric (1567) between the figures of diction and the figures of thought corresponds rather accurately to the idea which commonly prevailed:

> The figure of diction is a figure by which the speech is formed from words echoing pleasantly and smoothly among themselves. Thus, the figure of diction is nothing else than a certain measure and sound of the speech more harmonious in our souls than anything else. By music we are animated, we are inflamed and we languish; we are led along from joy to sorrow.[98]
>
> The figure of thought is a figure by which the speech is fashioned from some kind of sententious statement directed to a movement of the will. You will achieve a certain virile dignity, more excellent than a soft and feminine beauty: the latter seems to be the adornment and the color of the oration, the former, the vigor and the heart.[99]

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97. Quintilian *Inst.* ix. 1. 20-21.

98. "Figura dictionis, est figura qua elocutio figuratur dictionibus apte et jucunde inter sese resonantibus. Itaque figura dictionis, nihil aliud est, quam elocutionis sonus quidam et numerus: quo uno nihil est cognatius nostris animis. Numero enim excitamur, et incendimur, et languescimus, et hilaritatem tristitiamque deducimur." Omer Talon, *Audomari Talaei rhetorica, P. Rami praelectionibus illustrata* (Editio postrema; Parisiis, 1567), p. 34.

99. "Figura sententiae, est figura, qua oratio ratione sententiae aliquo animi motu affectae figuratur. Virilem autem quandam dignitatem, prae superiorum molli et delicata venustate obtines: ut illic color et sanguis orationis, hic nervi thorique esse videatur." *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Exclamation, revocation, apostrophe, and prosopopoeia are the figures of thought which Talon names.

The places of the tropes and figures are too numerous to mention here. It will suffice to indicate that with the emphasis on style which accompanied the Renaissance definition of rhetoric a copiousness and ornateness resulted which practically reduced rhetoric to a tabulation of the means of amplifying and of adorning a discourse, whether it was written or oral.

The devices of amplification and ornamentation which constituted the chief part of rhetoric were often regarded simply as figures or places under the heading "style." Of greatest importance were the figures of thought, derived from logical investigation. Among these figures are: definition, distinction, division, etymology, cause, effect, antecedent, consequence, circumstance, comparison, similitude, contrast, example. It is evident that most of these figures of thought correspond exactly to the dialectical places! A second group consists of the figures which become effective through an appeal to the emotions. In this class are included various forms of exclamation, interrogation, and vivid description.[100] Abraham Fraunce classified this group under figures of sentences consisting in simple speech; if the simple speech referred to a thing, various emotions expressed in soliloquy were used, but, if it referred to a person, then apostrophe and prosopopoeia would be more effective.

Finally, there were included in these figures of style numerous tropes and figures of words and syntax. The most frequently used tropes were the metaphor, irony, synecdoche, and allegory. Metaphor was generally defined according to the ways of moving from cause to effect,

100. William G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 59-60.

effect to cause, subject to adjunct, and adjunct to subject. Peacham gives an example of effect for cause: "The inventer for the thing invented: as Mars for warre, Ceres for frute, Bacchus for wine." [101]

The more strictly rhetorical places included the proverbs, maxims, similes, examples, apophthegms, definitions, and set descriptions. These together with the sententious sayings of all kinds added the *effectiveness* to the oration which every Renaissance man loved. These dicta were the distinctive characteristic of a specific "literary" style and resulted from the extraordinary influence which people ascribed to a moral sentence.

The rhetorical places as the Renaissance conceived of them, and as they have been discussed in this section, were directed more to the oratorical nature of the *locus communis* than to the dialectical nature. In the theories which have been set forth, the primary function of these places was to amplify and embellish the commonplace in its use as a little speech of praise or blame, in *laus* or *vituperatio,* or as a "speech-within-a-speech" in a more formal oration. The rhetorical topics in this position were to make effective, by their pleasing style and extolling of virtue, the teaching effected by the dialectical places. Consequently, eloquence was required of the orator, and, as the Renaissance writers make clear, this art of eloquence consisted in the skillful adaptation of an abundance of commonplaces with their store of humanistic learning and moral dicta. The tropes and figures, too, enjoyed a prominent place in this search for eloquence and became another type of "subject" topics to be used in amplification.

Keeping in mind the oratorical element in the com-

101. Peacham, *op. cit.,* p. 19.

monplace, the rhetoricians, in their theories of the rhetorical *loci,* associated the *locus communis* with the three kinds of orations and their various "places" for the development of a subject or argument. In spite of the careful efforts which these men sometimes made to distinguish between the places which belonged to the judicial, deliberative, or demonstrative speech, confusion proved unavoidable, and they concluded their treatises in a hopelessly tangled maze of heterogeneous topics.

The changing concept of the commonplace which considered the ceremonial oration more appropriate for embellishment than the judicial affected the "content" of the places. Previously, the commonplace topics had been concerned primarily with virtue or vice and their related "places." In the Renaissance, the commonplaces more typically included the systematic or analytic topics used as single arguments, the "subject" topics used as headings or locales indicating "seats of arguments" or storehouses, and the multiple places included under the "subject" topics—the arts and sciences, the tropes of style, and the figures of thought. With the increasing popularity of the ceremonial type of oratory or writing, the stylistic and figurative adornment of the commonplaces grew in importance. The Renaissance student, so thoroughly exercised in the commonplace procedure for analyzing and accumulating knowledge, accustomed himself to think of the inventing and assembling of the places in various metaphorical ways. Invention of the places became a "hunt" and the assembling of them a "storing of treasures."

3. METAPHORICAL SUBSTRUCTURE OF THE PLACES

When one thinks of mental and imaginative activity in terms of "places" *(topoi, loci)*, one is caught up in a maze of metaphors. For there are no real "places" such as the topical tradition seems to imply where thoughts are or can be stored. The concept of place applies to the operations involved in thought and expression only in the loosest analogous way. *A fortiori,* there is no "division" into common or special places in any literally spatial sense, nor any subdivision of the various common or special places. But the topical tradition, which was predominantly practical and seldom effectively speculative, does not ordinarily advert to the looseness of the analogies to which it habitually resorts. It accepts uncritically the concept of what we might style ideological space, which is implied in the idea of the places, common and/or special, and develops the concept not by psychological explanation of the analogical bases it may have but by letting the original metaphor embedded in the concept spawn a seemingly unlimited number of related or subsidiary metaphors.

The metaphorical developments center largely around two views: (1) that the places are "locations" for arguments in some sort of spatial field and (2) that the places are "containers" for arguments. These concepts of the *locus communis* are found in the very early definitions of a topic as a "place where" one found arguments and as a "seat" of arguments, and they remain fairly constant through the Greek, Latin, and Renaissance tradition. Aristotle's definition, given above, was repeated by Cicero, Quintilian, and the author of the *Ad Herennium.* In the Renaissance, Sherry, Wilson, Bacon, and Blundeville might be named among the many who thought of the commonplace as a "place where" one "located" arguments.

Underlying these metaphorical interpretations of the *locus communis* was the theory of invention or the art of "finding" arguments suitable for any discourse. In the *De partitione oratoria* Cicero instructs his son in the precepts of invention and location of arguments. He defines a topic as a place where arguments are stored, and in expanding his definition adds:

> But when the line of discussion is decided upon, the speaker must have before him a point of reference to which to refer all the lines of argument obtained from the topics of invention. . . . This is enough for one who sees the hidden content of each topic and who has the topics in question neatly labelled like storehouses of arguments.[102]

Cicero mentions the various processes summed up in the idea of invention with which the orator was concerned, the orderly arrangement of the arguments with proper identification (neatly labelled), the lining up of the arguments obtained from invention, and the storing of these topics. In other words, the orator must be a hunter of sorts, one who looks for places and, when he has discovered them, explores their "content" for any possible treasure he might find there.

These three activities: (1) the locating and identifying of the argument (which implies some topic or "locality" in space), (2) the assembling of material, and (3) the storing of the material or arguments in the regions of the places, form the foundation for the metaphorical structure of the commonplaces. The discussion of the Renaissance metaphorical concept of the places will be based on these three activities.

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102. Cicero *De partitione oratoria* 31. 109.

Localities in space.—Just what did the Renaissance metaphorical eye envision when it described the commonplace as being "located" in space or as *being* the space in which it was necessary to place the image, as John Paëpp expressed it? Certainly the Renaissance retained some notion of the classical view of the places as being situated in the "regions" of the mind. The frequent references made to the training of the memory and to the orderly arranging of the topics for aiding the memory indicate this point of view. However, it is more certain that the pages of the commonplace book were more commonly thought of as the "ground" of invention for the location of topics than the more abstract regions of the mind.

The titles of commonplace books often reveal, in figurative language, the nature and/or extension of the "space" within which the places were encompassed. Swertius, for example, compares the pages of his commonplace book to a forest through which the reader wanders in order to find the necessary material for the construction of an oration.[103] Comenius, on the other hand, calls the area in which the topics are situated a golden gate *(janua aurea)* which opens the way for treasures of all kinds.[104] Frequently the location of the places was referred to as a *Garden of Eloquence* or a *Garden of Pleasure* from which flowers and fruits might be gathered for adorning the

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103. John Swertius, *Rhetoricae ecclesiasticae sive de ratione componendae concionis . . .* (Coloniae, 1612), pp. 31-33. In Ong, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19, a detailed explanation is given concerning the influence which the concept of *silva* had on the notion of *loci* through Renaissance tradition.

104. J. A. Comenius, *Comenii janua aurea reserata quatuor linguarum, sive compendiosa methodus latinam, germanicam, gallicam, et italicam linguam peridiscendi, . . .* (editio secunda; Lugd. Batav., 1644), Address to "lector candide."

speech. In all of these metaphors there is implied the idea of spaciousness which seems to correspond somehow with the Renaissance love of copiousness. Thus the *locus communis* was described as "running about the whole plain as under the vault of the sky," [105] as if the area which it encompassed were infinite, and the places which it employed for amplification, innumerable.

The commonplaces were not situated in this spatial region haphazardly; each had its own identifying characteristics assigned variously by various authors but presumably recognizable by the oratorical inventor when he encountered them. Often the particular mark by which a topic was indicated would be a symbol of the kind of material stored within its region. For instance, Thomas Wilson calls a place "a restying corner of an argument" when he refers to dialectical cases.[106] When Ralph Lever assigns each of his "ten demaunders" to a particular store room which marks the nature of each, he refers to these rooms as "packets" with notes set on them for explanation.[107] In theology, the places might be identified as "Of Catholic Places" or "Of Heretical Places," while in medicine they would be marked according to the kinds of remedies for disease or, as Riolan indexes them, according to the prognosis and diagnosis of symptoms.[108] Neuhusius expands a military figure in speaking of the topics and calls their identifying marks *vexilla* (standards) which make known by their individual signs the array of arguments

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105. J. Caecilius Frey, *Iani Caecilius Frey . . . nec non philosophorum eiusdem academiae decani opera quae reperiri potuerunt in unum corpus collecta* (Parisiis, 1645), p. 286.

106. Wilson, *op. cit.*, fol. 37.

107. Lever, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

108. "Ut intelligatur communes fere esse fontes prognosces atque diagnoses, . . . existimavi contrahere in pauca, . . . summa capita divinationis." Riolan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

to be found marshalled behind them.[109] In general, the Renaissance thought of dialectical places in terms metaphorically suited to their function. Hence, Melanchthon speaks of the quiver which contains the arrows to be used in argumentation, and Blundeville, of the "shore anchor" which becomes a "place" of refuge when the opponent is threatening to shipwreck one's arguments. These places were often referred to as the nude body which rhetoric must adorn with beautiful vesture and ornaments; Bacon, Harvey, and Talon all refer to the logical topics (Talon and other Ramists call them "arguments") as the soul, or as the nerves and sinew giving support and life to the body.

In contrast to these rather austere figures were the more poetical images of the rhetorical places (for those who allowed these, as the Ramists did not) which were the adornment and embellishment of the oration. The topics became synonymous with flowers, jewels, stars, and princely vesture for bedecking the body and, in fact, for decorations of all kinds which would enhance the beauty and pleasure of the speech. In the Introduction to Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), the editors note that the pleader's profession prescribed for him his topics and his attitude towards them: if the topics required plumes, he must provide them. He turned up his "places" and "figures."[110] The pleader is guided by the dictates of decorum which led to the notion of style as "clothes" differing in richness according to the audience. The Renaissance writers sincerely cultivated their flowers of

109. "Titulos quosdam feci communes, sub quorum vexillis, hasce, quas videtis, latine sermonis copias et exemplorum et sententiarum manipulos collegi ac conscripti." Reinerius Neuhusius, *Manuale philologicum sive analecta optimorum authorum . . .* (Amstelodami, 1636), p. 7.

110. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie,* ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker, 1589 ed. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1936), pp. lxxix-xxx.

rhetoric, laid on their gayest colors, and brightened their language with dazzling lights. This was for them the essence of style.

However, the places and figures of style were not restricted to ornamental words but included as well *sententiae,* proverbs, and memorable quotations. Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* illustrates, in highly rhetorical terms, what the embellishment of an oration means:

> . . . for excellent sentences ought to be esteemed as precious pearles and costly jewels in princely vestures, and as the most beautifull flowers in gardens and fields, and as the most glorious lightes in the firmament: all which as they are most excellent in beauty and glorie, so are they most rare by creation and nature.[111]

The collection of *sententiae* made by John Stobaeus is praised as a most beautiful thesaurus and the *sententiae* are referred to as gems and jewels more precious than all treasures. Susenbrotus recommends the use of the figures of sentences and proverbs because they bring emblems or gems to the oration, and Francis Meres regards sentences, similitudes, and examples as the three most desired ornaments for effective motives.

The areas within which the "localities" were positioned, then, metaphorically speaking, included forests, gardens, military camps, or plains of battle according to the imaginative concept of the writer's mind. The places were identified as to their nature and function or as dialectical and rhetorical. The process of invention was to familiarize the orator with the "place where" he could find the arguments and recognize them instantly. It must have been something of this view of invention which the

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111. Peacham, *op. cit.,* p. 191.

metaphorical eye of the Renaissance beheld when it thought of the regions of the places with their distinguishing marks.

Assembling of the places.—If the orator assumed the figure of a hunter in his trek through the mental regions of his memory or across the pages of his commonplace book in his search for topics, then he must reach full stature in his explorations and collections of *loci communes.* Perhaps no part of invention is so important as this assembling of places which includes diligent reading, careful selection, and orderly arrangement of the material found in the best authors of classical antiquity. The whole learning and eloquence of the orator depended upon the sources of his invention and his skill in making use of them. It is little wonder, then, that instruction in the procedure of collecting places was popularly given in metaphorical imagery which would more quickly arouse the imagination of the students and urge them on to imitation and zealous endeavor.

The two images which recur most frequently in the rhetorical works for describing the invention and storing of material are the bee gathering nectar and the hunter pursuing game. Both images relate to wild life in nature, which suggests some kind of "searching for" or hunt, and to human life, which implies industry of some sort. Here "invention" is seen as a search which somehow "covers ground."

One of the oldest and, perhaps, the most appropriate analogy between nature and the eloquence of the orator is that of a bee gathering nectar from the flowers. The bee has always been a portending sign of eloquence when alighting on a person's tongue. Pliny refers to Plato's eloquence when speaking of the bees in his *Natural History:*

> They have alighted on the mouth of Plato even when he was still an infant, portending the charm of that matchless eloquence.[112]

Seneca's image of the bee, found in his *Moral Epistles,* must have been very familiar to the Renaissance rhetoricians:

> We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in; those bees, as our Vergil says, "liquentia mella/Stipant et dulci distendunt nectare cellas" (pack close the flowing honey,/And swell their cells with nectar sweet).[113]

Seneca applies the metaphorical connation to the orator:

> We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us—in other words, our natural gifts—we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.[114]

The invention or gathering of the places, their orderly arrangement, and their blending into the speech have

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112. Pliny, *Natural History,* trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), xi. 18. 55.

113. Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales,* trans. Richard M. Gummere (Loeb Classical Library—Harvard University Press), "On Gathering Ideas," II, 277, quoting Virgil's *Aeneid* i. 432f.

114. *Ibid.,* p. 280.

been combined into one simple image which the Renaissance student could easily understand and adapt to the assembling of material for commonplace books.

Peacham is thinking of a similar figure when he discusses style:

> So are you to gather this Honey of eloquence, A gift of heaven, out of many fields; making it your owne by diligence in collecting, care in expression, and skill in digestion. But let mee leade you forth into these all flowrie and verdant fields, where so many sweet varietie will amaze, and make you doubtfull where to gather first.[115]

Both Peacham and Seneca are illustrating metaphorically the searching of the places in order to find eloquence. However, their methods vary. Seneca first describes the picture of the bee flitting from flower to flower and then applies the image to the mental activity of the orator as he gathers material from the various topics. Peacham, on the other hand, makes the whole comparison an implied one, incorporating the metaphor skillfully into his exhortation without any direct reference to the bee and its industry in gathering honey. This latter manner of writing was in keeping with the Renaissance mentality which had been trained to think metaphorically and could respond instantly to the appearance of figurative patterning in an oration, but the response would not have been so spontaneous in Seneca's classical audience accustomed to a more austere style and manner of thinking.

In the *Novum organum* Bacon makes use of the bee versus the spider image in explaining induction:

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115. Peacham, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

> Those who have handled science have been either men of experiment or men of dogmas. The men of experiment are like the ant; they only collect and use: the reasoners resemble spiders who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes a middle course; it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and of the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own.[116]

In drawing this philosophical distinction between the scientists (men of experiment) and the scholastics (men of dogmas), Bacon is surely bringing in to his scientific treatise a commonplace image with which he became familiar through the rhetorical exercises of his school days.

Several other references are found concerning the bee in the treatises on style and in the commonplace books. Thomas Blount, when writing of the *Formula's Maiores* [sic] in *Academy of Eloquence,* says of them that they are analects "which like the humblebee I gather'd in Spring time out of the choisest Flowers of our English Garden." [117] Some of the topics which Blount calls commonplaces gathered from these choice flowers are: absence, anger, beauty, blush, constancy, company, entertainment, eloquence, and joy. But somehow the analogy which Blount makes does not ring true; he seems to be making use of the bee image because of its relation to eloquence and not because of any apt and practical application to his own work. Another instance of the same figure is noted in a dedicatory epistle found in Neuhusius's *Manual of Philology.* The excellence of the author's work is recom-

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116. Bacon, *Works,* Vol. VIII: *Novum organum,* p. 131.

117. Thomas Blount, *The Academy of Eloquence:* containing a Compleat English Rhetorique, Exemplified; Common-places, and Formula's, . . . (2d ed. with additions; London, 1656), Epistle Dedicatory.

mended to the youth who are willing to labor diligently in collecting similar commonplaces:

> Since you have happily marked out the way in this work, any youth who makes use of these commonplaces will be able to follow along the way safely. As many as desire to labor fruitfully, according to this example, will be able to do so; just as the fertile bees arrange honey in the beehives, so, whatever they read which is worthy to be noted down, let them arrange it according to the commonplaces.[118]

The one requisite for success in this work is the willingness to labor and to exercise care in the selection and arrangement of the places.

One further passage might be cited, from Erasmus's *De copia,* in which the boys are urged to be zealous in this imitation of the bee:

> The student, diligent as a little bee, will flit about through all the gardens of authors and will attack all the little flowerlets from whence he collects some honey which he carries into his own hive; and, since there is so much fertility of material in these that they are not all able to be plucked off, he will select the most excellent and adapt it to the structure of his own work.[119]

Erasmus is primarily interested in the commonplaces because of the abundance of material they provide and

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118. Neuhusius, *op. cit.,* pp. 4-5.

119. "Itaque studiosus ille velut apicula diligens, per omnes auctorum hortos volitabit, flosculis omnibus adsultabit, undique succi non nihil colligens, quod in suum deferrat alvearium. Et quoniam tanta est in his rerum foecunditas, ut omnia decerpi non possint, certe praecipua deliget, et ad operis sui structuram accommodabit." Erasmus, *De copia,* Lib. II, "Ratio colligendi exempla," p. 101.

the eloquence which results from their artistic adaptation in the oration.

Although these writers who have been discussed made use of the same metaphorical illustration, each one has his own particular application. For instance, Peacham was concerned with decorative figures of style, Neuhusius stressed the fruitfulness of the places when properly arranged, and Erasmus promised copiousness and eloquence in learning to the boys who imitated the bee's industry.

However, there are several elements which are common to each of the descriptions illustrating the assembling of the commonplaces. One of these elements is the insistence on diligent industry in assembling the commonplaces. Peacham calls it a "diligence in collection," and Neuhusius advises, "labor fruitfully." This notion of imitating the industry of the bee is traditional and symbolic of man's imitation of nature. The insistence on a zealous collecting of the places, a careful sorting of them, and an orderly arranging, indicates the setting up of a kind of oratorical oeconomics or industrial management for the proper execution of the speech. A second common element in the image of the bee is the relation of man with nature which is transferred metaphorically to the orator's dependence on his own natural ability or his *ingenium*. In the use of the commonplaces it is the artistic genius of each speaker which determines the eloquence and effectiveness of the oration. The places, like the honey of the bee, must become part of a new product, so skillfully inserted that their origins are lost in the integrated whole. Peacham speaks of this assimilation as "skill in digestion" by which the collected matter becomes the writer's own. Erasmus advises the boys to adapt that which

they have collected to the structure of their own oration. Instructions to this effect were frequently repeated in the directions for assembling and using commonplaces. Often the image of an old patch sewed on a new garment was used to illustrate the effect of an inartistic combination of places, and the abundance of so much poor writing was attributed to a lack of ingenuity in putting the *loci communes* and their wealth of wisdom to effective use.

The hunting metaphor, which is another traditional figure used in describing the invention of places for a speech, portrays even more graphically than the bee image the mental process of the orator in the amplification of his theme with the commonplace. The classical orators were familiar with this figure of the hunter exploring the various localities in his search for the appropriate "game" or "place" needed for pleading his cause. Cicero mentions it in his *De oratore:*

> Again, in art, in observation and in practice alike, it is everything to be familiar with the ground over which you are to chase and track down your quarry. When you have mentally encompassed all that area, if only you are quite hardened to practical dealings, nothing will escape you, but every detail of an affair will come up with a rush and fall into your net.[120]

If one is familiar with all the places which the area of the mind can encompass, then he will find every detail needed for his speech. Cicero refers to the part which art and practice must jointly share if success is to be achieved.

Quintilian, likewise, uses the hunting image in which, like Cicero, he insists upon a knowledge of the "localities":

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120. Cicero *De oratore* ii. 34. 147.

> For just as all kinds of produce are not provided by every country, and as you will not succeed in finding a particular bird or beast, if you are ignorant of the localities where it has its usual haunts or birthplaces, as even the various kinds of fish flourish in different surroundings some preferring a smooth and others a rocky bottom . . . so not every kind of argument can be derived from every circumstance, and consequently our search requires discrimination.[121]

In his comparison, Quintilian limits the hunting area more to a particular locality or place than to a broader plain. This corresponds to his belief that there is scarcely a *locus communis* which can be applied to every circumstance. There must be some relation between the mark or "identity" of the locality and the game sought in that place.

By the time the hunting image reached the Renaissance it had become much more detailed and more realistic, as Wilson's description of such a scene illustrates:

> Those that bee good harefinders will soone finde the hare by her fourme, for when thei see the ground beaten flatte around about, and faire to the sighte: thei have a narrowe gesse by al liklihode that the hare was there a litle before. Likewise the huntesman in huntyng the foxe, will soon espie when he seeth a hole, whether it be a fare borough, or not. So he that will take profeite in this parte of Logique, must bee like a hunter, and learne by labour to knowe the boroughes. For these places bee nothing elles, but covertes or boroughes, wherein if anyone searche diligently, he maie finde game at pleasure. And although perhappes one place faile him, yet shal he finde a douzen other places, to accomplishe his purpose.[122]

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121. Quintilian *Inst.* v. 10. 19-23.
122. Wilson, *op. cit.*, fol. 37.

The spatial field in which the places are located becomes for Wilson a hunting ground and the "localities" are identified by the "forms" or shape which they embody, just as the ground beaten flat reveals the habitat of the hare, and the "borough," that of the fox. Again there appears that same insistence on a knowledge of the places as to arrangement and "content," as if the thought processes were somehow "space bound" and knowledge had become some kind of an object which could be moved from one container to another. Wilson voices the assurance, like other Renaissance logicians, that if one knows the places, he will succeed in inventing all the arguments necessary for successfully accomplishing his purpose.

Bacon makes use of the metaphorical relation between invention and hunting in the more restricted interpretation of Quintilian. The image is used in Bacon's discussion of the artificial memory in which are stored the places which have been digested and prepared beforehand. The principal part of artificial memory is what Bacon calls "prenotion" which he interprets as a "kind of cutting off of infinity of search." If a man is looking for something and has no notion of what he wants, he beats about as if in infinite space, but if he has some idea of what he is seeking, "the memory ranges in a narrower compass; like the hunting of a deer within and enclosure." [123] Bacon seems to be associating the spatial freedom which Frey, Valerius, and other writers accorded the *locus communis* (they spoke of it as "wandering about the whole plain under the vault of the sky" trying thus to indicate in figurative manner the universal scope of the commonplace) with an aimless search which yields little

123. Bacon, *Works*, Vol. IX, Bk. V, Ch. 5, p. 105.

game. In other words, he restricts the hunt to a more limited area which has been marked off beforehand, or to the topics in the commonplace books. Certainly Bacon would not be in agreement with those men who think of their collections of places as "the whole of philosophy" or the "universal index to a knowledge of the whole world." In the same chapter on artificial memory, Bacon discusses emblems which he calls "intellectual conceptions reduced to sensible images" and rhetorical means of impressing the memory more forcibly through their sense appeal. "One will more easily remember the image of a hunter pursuing a hare than the mere notion of invention." [124]

There are other less common metaphorical images used in reference to the assembling of topics, but each of them, like the bee and hunter image, has the same instruction for the student of oratory: the necessity of invention, a knowledge of the places, and the skillful use of them in speaking or writing. Ralph Lever thinks of the invention of arguments in terms of a merchant with his wares. Lever converted Aristotle's ten categories —which are not really *topoi* at all, as explained at the beginning of this chapter, and as Lever in a way knew, for he calls them demaunders—into items placed in ten storerooms.

> For as the good and ready marchaunt provideth store of sundry wares, and sorteth every kinde by itselfe, adding special markes for his better direction, that hee may with convenient speede fit and serve his customer when he calleth: So the quick and sharpe reasoner, must gather general rules together, and place them in order, that

124. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

> he may have in redinesse when need shall be, store of reasons, for proofe or disproofe of matters in doubt.[125]

Invention is now situated in a warehouse rather than on a hunting ground and the dialectician becomes a merchant. The arguments, like the sundry wares, are placed in storerooms according to their particular kinds where they can be discovered easily by the orator. But the underlying idea is the same, knowledge is categorized and neatly stored for future use.

Seats of arguments.—There is another type of metaphor which the Renaissance used in conjunction with the identification and location of the commonplaces and which acted as something of a complementary factor in the process of invention, the "container" image or the "seats" of arguments. After the places had been located by diligent searching, and after they had been properly identified, it was necessary to provide some region or receptacle in which to store them. (Or were the arguments "seated" before they were found and catalogued? In that case, they would be transferred from one receptacle to another.) This storage place might be in the localities of the memory or, as generally happened in the Renaissance, in the commonplace books which were often called the artificial memory. The desire for possessing a kind of universal knowledge led to this distrust of the "natural" memory and the supplying of an auxiliary one. Thomas Farnaby explains this in his *Index rhetoricus:*

> That the mind may not be taxed by the manifold and confused reading of so many such things and in order to prevent the escape of something valuable, that we

125. Lever, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

> have read, heard, or discovered through the processes of thinking itself, it will be very useful to intrust to notebooks, as though to a store-room for provisions and as an aid substituted for memory, those things which seem noteworthy and striking.[126]

Farnaby mentions some of the commonplaces to which he refers: universal word, new or with new meanings, fragmentary phrases, the more elegant formulas for coherence and subject matter, similes, metaphors, ideas, plays on words, and allegories. There is little relevance in this list of places to the original concept of the *locus communis* with its universal import and moral content. When the places have been assembled, Farnaby directs that the names and headings be arranged in an alphabetical order as though they were stored in honeycombs or storehouses.[127]

Camerarius thought of the commonplace books, each of which was properly indexed, as containing stores of provisions, so numerous as to be encyclopedic in content. Frey and Polman also give directions for the arrangement of the commonplaces that they might serve as storerooms. Lever and his ten storerooms have already been mentioned. Similar to the storeroom image is that of a cell or receptacle in which the topics are "contained." Melancthon, Chyrtaeus, and Micraelius thought this way, as did those who employed the image of the bee gathering nectar and packing the cells with honey. Vives used the image of a nest *(nidos),* with which the little boys must have been familiar, when he instructed them in making their note books: "Divide it (book) into certain topics, so to say, into nests. In one, jot down the names

126. Thomas Farnaby, *Index rhetoricus* (London, 1625), trans. Ray Nadeau, *Speech Monographs,* XVII (1950), 174.

127. *Ibid.*

of those subjects of daily converse, in another rare words, . . ." [128]

The thesaurus, although it served the same purpose as the storerooms, seemed to imply contents of more excellent worth. In the dedicatory epistle of John Stobaeus's commonplace book, the writer commends Stobaeus for having compiled from the best classic authors the most complete and beautiful of books:

> A thesaurus with all the gems and jewels by far more precious than all thesauri; this is the most revered and most illustrious *sententiae* of the Greeks, the most adorned histories and memorable examples which he has left for his students, a work most sweet and flowery, a workshop or storehouse filled with diverse kind of pleasing spaces.[129]

In the same rhetorical vein, Crenius writes of his thesaurus of *loci communes* which are stored or hidden (he uses the word *recondat* which suggests that the places must be "found" or invented) and which will furnish a flowing abundance for writing or speaking.[130] Hibernicus produces "a thesaurus of the whole of philosophy." [131]

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128. Vives, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix.

129. ". . . ex optimis (gemmis) atque ex aceruo gemmarum preciosiores duntaxat in suum thesaurum retulit; . . . gravissimas et illustrissimas Graecorum sententias, interdum et historias elegantiores et exempla memorabilia, . . . ex vario genere florum quicquid inerat succi suavioris exhauriens, hanc . . . apothecam, diverso genere nobilium aromatum instar divitis pharmacopolae, singulis suis capsulis discernenes, implevit." John Stobaeus, *Ioannis Stobaei sententiae ex thesauris Graecorum delectae quarum authores circiter ducentos et quinquagenta citat, et in sermones sive locos communes digeste* (Tiguri, 1559).

130. "Proderunt non parum loci communis, in quos recondat, quidquid legendo vel audiendo fuerit affectus: ut videlicet ex hujuscemodi thesauro, quandocumque dicendi vel scribendi materia se obtulerit, sua possit expromere, et facilem copiam in numerato habere." Thomas Crenius, *De eruditione comparanda in humanioribus, vita, studio politico, cognitione auctorum ecclesiasticorum, historicorum, politicorum ac militarium, . . .* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1699), p. 290.

131. Thomas Hibernicus, *Flores omnium pene doctorum qui tum in theologia tum in philosophia . . . claruerunt, . . .* (Coloniae, 1576).

Gabriel Harvey and Vossius imagine the topics or regions of the arguments as domiciles, which would put them in closer relation to the classical "seat" of arguments. Bacon, using the house image, calls the "Lesser Forms" of rhetoric

> those parts of speech which answer to the vestibules, back doors, ante-chambers, withdrawing chambers, passages, etc., of a house; and may serve indiscriminately for all subjects. . . . Such are prefaces, conclusions, digressions, transitions, intimations of what is coming, excusations, and a number of the kind.[132]

These domestic places hint of the commonplace because they serve all subjects alike and because, with the prefaces, conclusions, and the like, they resemble somewhat a little speech.

Other images could be added to these—a quiver containing arrows, an armory in which weapons are stored for use, a mirror reflecting the whole of philosophy or a theater in which the greater men of ancient learning appear. Whatever the figurative concept, the general concept underneath is the same—that somehow one is able to sort knowledge into "places" and draw it out when occasion demands.

An attempt to reconstruct the ideas upon which the metaphorical structure of the places is based calls for summarizing the three activities of the art of invention and makes evident the increasing importance of the spatial coefficient in some Renaissance concepts of knowledge. Since in the topical or commonplace tradition, knowledge was conceived of as being contained in isolated places, according to its kind, and not as an integrated

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132. Bacon, *Works,* Vol. IX, Bk. V, Ch. 5, p. 182.

whole, it was easy for the Renaissance student to picture it in terms of spatial areas. The topics or *loci communes* which had been collected or "found" were situated at definite places in the memory or in the notebook. These topics contained other commonplaces such as examples, proverbs, quotations, little speeches, arguments (in the sense of the analytic topics), or figures of style which the orator must explore. When a theme had to be expanded, virtue praised and embellished, or vice depreciated, the orator would begin the mental process of hunting through the places, "pulling out" from this one or that one whatever was apropos for his subject; then he would skillfully integrate the material he had collected into his oration. Conceived in this way, intellectual activity and communication are reduced to a kind of local motion.[133] Knowledge appears as something outside the mind, as a set of objects maneuvered from one locale to another or as material contained in spaces from which it can be drawn out as needed.

This spatializing of knowledge helped give currency to the Renaissance idea that universal knowledge could be contained within the pages of the commonplace book. The dialectical and rhetorical places with their metaphorical imagery, stored indiscriminately but in great mass within these books, were considered as *loci* of the entire "circle" of the arts and sciences popularly taught at the time. The enthusiasm for universal knowledge, so prevalent in the Renaissance, received impetus from Ramus's "method" in dialectic. The possibility of "methodizing" sciences or quasi-sciences into a systematic array in a printed book or series of charts led to the belief that compends of *all* knowledge could be collected.

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133. Ong, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-21.

Alsted's huge encyclopedia, which he called an ordered assembly of all things to be learned by man, is an example of such a collection. The arts and sciences are organized topically and methodically in a kind of "circle of learning" which supposedly includes all that can be learned. In the diagrammatic approach to knowledge, which the Ramist "method" made possible, the individual arts and sciences could be arranged in separate "departments," and the "places" or topics found under each of them listed in an orderly or dialectical sequence, such as division, definition, relation, and the like. Such a systematic arrangement of knowledge gave the impression that within the "seat of arguments" located under a particular science one could discover all that was to be known about it.[134] Consequently, if a commonplace book was arranged in this methodical manner, it could be considered, according to a common Renaissance notion, as an encyclopedic collection of universal knowledge, and the commonplaces themselves would become a means of implementing the thirst for universal knowledge. As a modern correlative of a Renaissance collection of commonplaces, one might indeed adduce, in a certain sense, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

134. *Ibid.,* pp. 295-306.

III

The "Praxis" of the Commonplaces

The importance of the Renaissance theory of the commonplace should now be evident. All knowledge and all oratorical eloquence were rooted in the places. The *loci communes* became so integral a part of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinking that knowledge itself came to be conceived of more and more in terms of areas or containers with objects which somehow could be located in space and moved about from one "locality" to another. A thorough familiarity with the workings of the topics of logic assured one of success in any controversy, and an intimate acquaintance with the tropes and figures of style (topics in rhetoric) gave promise of an oration which could move any audience with its persuasive elocution. So the Renaissance theorist believed. Theoretically, too, the commonplaces were invested with the authority of teaching, moving, and delighting, which paralleled the division of the places as dialectical, rhetorical, and stylistic. Underlying these various concepts of the places, whether

real or imaginary, was the art of invention which was somehow to produce the results hoped for in the ideal theory.

How did the Renaissance activate its theories of invention in order that the notions of the commonplaces, the teaching, moving, and delighting, might become the "praxis" [1] applied to the arts of communication? An exposition of the practical use of the commonplaces will illustrate how this process of invention aided the Renaissance student and orator in discovering and collecting material and in the arranging of it under definite headings or topics. The reading of the classical authors, taking excerpts from the reading, and the sorting of the material under certain headings provided the store of learning for the orator's duty of *teaching*. The amplification and embellishment of the material, through rhetorical and stylistic devices, added the *persuasion* and *delight* needed to heighten the didactic import of the oration. The practical notions of the commonplaces will be discussed according to these three functions of invention: teaching, moving, and delighting. Again, a cross-section sampling of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors will be used.

1. SEATS OF ARGUMENTS

Since the commonplaces were of such importance in every kind of discourse, and since a thorough knowledge and skillful use of them preceded any wisdom and eloquences, they must have occupied a position of promi-

1. A term frequently used in the Renaissance in the sense of "practice" as distinguished from "theory." D. Bartholomew Keckermann, *Gymnasii logici*, "Loci communes" (Genevae, 1614), pp. 490-91, refers to the rhetorical places as to their "use and praxis," not as to precepts.

nence in the school curriculum. Textbooks and records of the schoolmasters attest the truth of this, that early in the beginning years of a boy's education it was not uncommon for him to make his own book of commonplaces for use in his exercises. Thomas Farnaby, an early seventeenth-century master, prefaces his *Index rhetoricus* with a little exhortation on the value of collections of commonplaces:

> Therefore, in order that our candidate may properly study eloquence from his very cradle and progress through all the stages of development, the advantage of a general knowledge and a wealth of information must be sought by such a student from the repositories of wisdom.[2]

Farnaby actually suggests these collections as an assurance against the "escape of something valuable":

> It will be very useful to intrust to notebooks, as though to a store-room for provisions and as an aid substituted for memory, those things which seem noteworthy and striking.[3]

Another instance of the early beginnings of this training in invention or in locating seats of arguments is found in the curriculum outline which Charles Hoole gives for the various Forms in the grammar school:

> Form II: In translating Latin, in learning how to speak or write it, the children were to have little paper books wherein they were to enter choice phrases from classical authors and avoid Anglicisms.

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2. Farnaby, *Speech Monographs,* XVII (1950), 172.
3. *Ibid.*

> Form III: Each pupil keeps a paper book in quarto in which to enter rules and exceptions, and to make collections of "pregnant examples" from Latin authors.
> Form IV: Each pupil is to have a paper book . . . into which, under right heads, he is to note all niceties of grammar, with which he meets. Boys should then be encouraged to read them and to cite what they find in them, and place it under its proper head, in the paper-book. . . . Therefore they are to make a synopsis of Dugard's text book *(Elementa rhetorices)* and to enter into a commonplace book "whatever they like" from other writers on rhetoric.[4]

Thus from the first readings of authors, the boys were to begin selecting "choice phrases" and recording them for future use. Soon the pupil became familiar with the location of his material under proper heads or "seats," a practice which would continue for him as long as he endured in his desire to become eloquent and learned.

The commonplace in the school exercises.—The first notion of the use of commonplaces was presented to the boys in the *sententiae pueriles,* one of the first lessons in learning how to speak and write Latin. These *sententiae* were aphoristic statements usually of high moral content which the boys used for memorization and for the "making of Latins" *(Lateines),* that is, the turning of the English axiom into Latin with as many variations of the words as possible. (That is, the noun would be changed from one case to the other and the verb taken through the different tenses, and so on.) The collections of *sententiae* most frequently found in the list of textbooks were the Pseudo-Cato's *Disticha de moribus,* Aesop's *Fables,* the

4. Charles Hoole, *New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School* (1660), quoted in Foster Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1916), pp. 103-5.

Colloquies of Erasmus (usually with some expurgation), and the *Dialogues* of Corderius.[5] Brinsley mentions in addition to these a great collection of moral sayings from Cicero, and from Reusner's *Symbola* which were "poesies" and "sentences" of the Emperors, Italian, Greek, and German.[6] The *Colloquies* and *Dialogues* were especially necessary in conversational Latin which was a requisite at all times in the school, while the "making of Latins" furnished exercise in the writing and proper construction of Latin sentences.

The *sententiae pueriles* which were learned in the grammar school became the commonplaces which were used for developing themes. Brinsley gives direction to the pupils for making a collection of didactic sentences on a commonplace subject assigned, such as *amicitia,* and for the use of these sentences in developing little essays. The whole purpose for such training is, according to Brinsley, to teach the scholars how to acquire an abundance of matter and apply it to the praise of virtue or the dispraise of vice:

> The principall end of making Theams, I take to be this, to furnish schollers with all store of the choisest matter, that they may thereby learn to understand, speak or write of any ordinary Theame, Morall or Politicall, such as usually fall into discourse amongst men and in practice of life; and especially concerning vertues and vices. So as

5. These collections are included in the lists of texts given by Hoole *(New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School),* Plimpton *(The Education of Shakespeare),* Stowe *(English Grammar Schools in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth),* Brinsley *(Ludus literarius),* Crane *(Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance),* Johnson *(The Scholar's Guide from the Accidence to the University).*

6. John Brinsley, *Ludus literarius* (1627) or *A Consolation for Our Grammar Schools,* introd. Thomas Clark Pollock (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1943), pp. 174-75.

to worke in themselves a greater love of the vertue and hatred of the vice, and be able with soundnesse of reason to draw others to their opinion.[7]

Theme-writing was the earliest exercise in which the commonplaces were put to practical use. This was, at first, nothing more than the expansion of a simple sententious maxim developed according to the divisions of a speech with exordium, narration, confirmation, confutation, and conclusions. Even though these little themes were often twelve or sixteen lines, they were usually composed as a little oration, and, consequently, gave practice in the use of both dialectical and rhetorical places.[8] (Perhaps, too, these little orations were a part of the collection of commonplaces and were used as a "speech-within-a-speech" when the boys advanced to more lengthy orations.) The exordium and conclusion, calling for a more embellished style of writing, provided opportunity for supplying some of the tropes and figures from the topics of rhetoric. The narration, confirmation, and confutation, which required arguments of controversy, were of a more dialectical nature and enabled the students to become more familiar with the topics of logic. Various texts were mentioned, often perfunctorily, for the boys engaged in the study of the topics and their amplification and embellishment—the *Topica* of Cicero, and his *De oratore,* the *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian, the *Ad Herennium,* the *Topics* and *Rhetoric* of Aristotle—but the most popularly sought, and the ones most adaptable to the young boy, were the *De copia* of Erasmus, for adornment and enrichment, and the *Progymnasmata* of

7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*

Aphthonius for themes.[9] This latter work was particularly valuable because of its thematic patterns and because it introduced the boys to the dialectical and rhetorical processes of invention in a more simple manner than the classical authors mentioned above.

The theme-writing which formed the groundwork for the later building of a more eloquent oration was to train the boys to utilize proverbs and sententious quotations from the poets as amplifying matter in the development of some commonplace. Such a method instilled in the boys the habit of discovering everything that might be said for or against a general proposition, but it did not set out expressly to develop originality. "Invention" here meant recall of what was already known, never new discovery. The commonplaces became a necessity under such circumstances and assumed an importance in Renaissance education never before nor since attained. In exercise, the pupils were directed to an exploration of the topics where one looked for *loci communes*. They were shown where to look for answers, historical parallels, apt sayings from poets, philosophers, and historians, and for descriptive details of every kind. The teaching generally focused on invention and on the formulas learned from the commonplace method.[10]

Brinsley's entire plan of instruction is based on invention and disposition of the places. He suggests to the students

> to remember where they have read anything of that Theame, or by the Indexes of their bookes of Common

9. T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespere's Small Latine and Less Greeke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), I, 134-63.

10. Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Morningside Heights, Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 210-11.

places; as Tullies' Sentences, Reusner, or the like, to seeke what they can find of that matter.[11]

The remembrance of the places will teach them how to confute a position, or an oration, *ex tempore* with much admiration. Easy disputations were practiced in the grammar schools and Brinsley advises that the places be sought which are for ordinary fallacies: cause, effect, contrary, testimony:

> For those common places or heads of Invention, all scholars who come to any ripenesse, are necessarily to be acquainted with them. . . . These will ever stand them in stead for making all Epistles, Theames, Verses, Declamations, Oppositions. Also to helpe them to resolve whatsoever they reade or heare in any continued speech: and remember it, by gathering all the matter unto the severall heads of Invention. . . . Without these helpes they shall never be able to doe these things; or at least not with that facilitie, and in so commenble (*sic*) a manner, though they have otherwise very singular gifts of nature and learning.[12]

It another place this schoolmaster says: "Let them practise when they would invent matter, but to runne thorow those places cursorily in their mindes; and if one place do not offer fit matter, another will surely, and furnish them with store." [13] For the composition of a theme Brinsley depends upon the examples of Aphthonius for the arguments and their places. When the student has made an exposition of the arguments, then he should recall where he has read anything about them by the indices of his commonplace books; likewise, in the con-

11. Brinsley, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

firmation and confutation of the theme, he must have recourse to the notes taken from the authors in order to invent the principal reasons for proof and refutation. When the pupil seeks to invent reasons of his own, he must follow the chief heads of invention from Aphthonius: causes, effects, subjects, adjuncts, disagreeable things, comparisons, notations, distributions, definitions, testimonies. For a variety of exordiums and conclusions, besides Aphthonius, the *Adages* of Erasmus or the *Apothegms* of Lycosthenes may be consulted.[14] Brinsley is not at all singular in his dependence on the *loci communes* even in the simplest rhetorical exercise. There is scarcely a Renaissance schoolmaster or rhetorician whose name could not be added to Brinsley's as advocator of intensive instruction in the assembling and use of the commonplaces.

Erasmus was one of the earliest of those rhetoricians who set down instructions and material for the little boys' theme work, and his collections became the handbooks for the instructors who used them constantly through the sixteenth century. Melancthon and Vives gave explicit directions for the assembling of the books and the application of the material assembled. Lorich's translation of Aphthonius (1537) was repeatedly used and reprinted through more than a century and his editions of various groups of texts furnished commonplace books to cover the different forms and exercises of grammar school.[15] Wolffhart (Lycosthenes) was another schoolmaster, teaching at Basel, whose *Apophthegmatum* (1553) expressed in a practical way his teachings on the method of using the places. Wilson, Taverner, Ascham, and

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-80.

15. Donald L. Clark, "Rise and Fall of Progymnasmata in 16th and 17th Centuries," *Speech Monographs,* XIX (1952), 259-63.

Chytraeus were other Elizabethan rhetoricians who provided directions and "copy" *(copia)* for similar instruction. In the seventeenth century the names of Charles Hoole, whose *New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching* (1660) based the curriculum on a commonplace foundation, Ralph Johnson, *The Scholars Guide from the Accidence to the University* (1665), and Thomas Farnaby, whose *Index rhetoricus* has already been mentioned, might be cited as evidence that the popularity of the commonplace method was to be long-lived in the history of rhetorical education.

Was there any consistency in this type of learning in which the commonplace with all its ramifications seemed to be the center, or was there any common pattern which the instructors followed?

The popularity of the themes of Aphthonius shows how much they provided methods for the practice of theme-writing. These themes were so designed that they furnished patterns, in graded sequence, for a variety of orations which gave the student an opportunity to acquire a facility in the handling of the dialectical, rhetorical, and stylistic places. The topics of the various exercises were considered as "subject" headings which could be developed into little orations. Since these themes provided the early training in the commonplaces for the future orator, a brief survey of each one will illustrate in some way how all-inclusive the oratorical training, even in the grammar schools, sought to be:

Fables and *Tales* are examples from poetry and history.
Expository exercise of the *Chreia* and the *Proverb* are topics developed by iteration, enthymeme, contrast, illustration, example, and the testimony of authority
Refutation and *Confirmation* are argumentative exercises in analyzing such myths as Apollo and Daphne, to prove

it obscure or not obscure, incredible, impossible, inconsistent, unfitting, or inexpedient

Commonplace is the enlarging on the praise of virtue and the dispraise of vice

Encomium and *Vituperation* praise a person or thing for virtue or dispraise a person or thing for vice

Comparison is a discussion concerning the two preceding topics

Prosopopoeia is an imaginary monolog written (supposedly) by a historical, legendary, or fictitious person

Description trains the boy in vivid presentation of details of sight or sound

Thesis develops skill in deliberative oratory arguing for or against a general question

Legislation gives training in speaking for or against a law, usually from ancient history [16]

The many topics touched upon in the expansion of these themes make it clear how valuable a collection of commonplaces could be. Both the dialectical and rhetorical topics and the figures of adornment and embellishment have a place in the subjects. The three types of oratory—deliberative, judicial, and demonstrative—are illustrated; the commonplace proper, the intrinsic and extrinsic places, didactic examples, fables, and proverbs are included. Most of the individual forms or themes have their own topics or places through which the subject might be drawn for further amplification. For example, the *locus communis* (in the sense of a form of discourse), in order to reach its full stature as a developed "speech-within-a-speech," begins with an exordium (for the sake of exercise) and proceeds through the topics (or commonplaces in the sense of sources or headings for arguments), from the incompatible, exposition, comparison, intention,

16. *Ibid.*

digression, rejection of mercy, lawful, just, rational, and possible. These *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius, accommodated to the capacities of young minds, provided so thorough an initiation into the fellowship of the commonplaces that a prepossession with them remained a hallmark of the mature orator and of the many writers on rhetoric.

The books of commonplaces.—The use of the commonplaces in every form of oral and written teaching demonstrates the result attained by another method of learning, the keeping of a book of commonplaces. Such an exercise, which was to continue throughout the oratorical career, presented the first lessons in invention which the pupils were taught. These books containing the seats of arguments give conclusive proof of the Renaissance notion as to the "praxis" of the *loci communes.*

The keeping of a commonplace book was not peculiar to the Renaissance. From the very early origins of rhetoric such collections were made and used for declamations of all kinds. The themes of Hermogenes, Theon, and Aphthonius have the nature of such a work, and Aristotle, who insisted on the philosophical aspect of rhetoric, provided for such set formulas:

> We should select also from the written handbooks of arguments, and should draw up sketch-lists of them upon each several kind of subject, putting them down under separate headings e.g. "On Good," or "On Life," and that "On Good" should deal with every form of good, beginning with the category of essence. In the margin, too, one should indicate also the opinions of individual thinkers, e.g. "Empedocles said that the elements of bodies were four:" [17]

17. Aristotle *Topica* i. 14. 105 b.

This is closely paralleled by directions given to students in the sixteenth-century rhetoric books. The Latin orators, as well as the Greek, depended upon the store of the topics for aid in speaking and writing. Cicero, in the instruction to his son on the requisites for a good orator, points out the need for a store of topics for arguments. The orderly arrangement of these topics, he continues, is the best aid to clearness of memory; he compares this collecting and labelling of seats of arguments to a wax writing tablet on which letters are inscribed.[18] A last example from the classical authors, Quintilian, provides further evidence that the places were prepared and memorized beforehand by the orator and that anyone using such forms will "find his fluency increased . . . and will be prepared to deal with any case." The commonplace which Quintilian defines as a "thesis or passage dealing with some general principle or theme" is a weapon which should always be stored in the armory ready for immediate use as occasion demands.[19]

In the medieval centuries, the books of topics or "places" took the form of dictionaries, florilegia, manuals for preaching, and formularies of epistles. The "heaping up" of material was a kind of *sine qua non* with the orators who fostered amplification to an exaggerated degree in their sophistic rhetoric. St. Augustine, who desired to restore classical precedence to the oratory of his day, recognized the usefulness of such collections:

> Although many pertinent arguments have been found, yet unless they are collected according to their dignity and nobility, as it were in certain assigned seats, they will

18. Cicero *De oratore* ii. 86. 354.
19. Quintilian *Inst.* x. 5. 11-14.

either escape or they will not bring much profit to the noble task.[20]

When this traditional practice of finding and storing knowledge reached the Renaissance, it continued to be exercised, not alone by the students and instructors, but by anyone who nurtured a desire to be, or to be thought, learned. A book of commonplaces was somewhat an assurance that one could, by diligent perusal of its pages, become an eloquent orator, a polished courtier, or a versatile conversationalist. The popularity of these books in the Renaissance was furthered by the printing press which made them easily available to anyone.

The question arises as to the actual value which the assembling and locating of the topics had for the Renaissance man. Why did he manifest such zeal in collecting memorable dicta from the pages of the classical authors? If we look through the pages of instruction which the rhetoricians wrote as to the manner and necessity of making such collections, we shall find at least the psychological reason supporting this thinking.

Two directives are found in nearly every instruction for assembling and making use of the commonplace topics: provide a copiousness of material and put it in a carefully arranged order. Melanchthon calls orderly arrangement of the places a perfect art which is produced from the collecting of places; ". . . just as the commonplaces are able to be drawn forth copiously and variously, it is necessary to produce from these arts a perfect art." [21] He

20. "Etenim quamvis multa et pertinentia inventa sint, tamen, nisi pro qualitate et magnitudine sua certis et quasi legitimis sedibus collocentur, aut non magno opere proficient." Augustine, "Invention," quoted in Charles Halm, *Rhetores latini minores* (Pipsiae, 1883), p. 137.

21. "Sed tamen ut copiose ac varie tractari loci communes possint, accedere oportet ex ipsis artibus perfectam doctrinam." Melanchthon, *Elementorum rhetorices*, p. 70.

points out the value to be derived from this "perfect art":

> It will aid the memory when we distribute these in order in certain classes and this distribution of things among themselves will show order. . . . Economy should be observed; do not confuse the places but observe which ones are for theology and philosophy. And philosophies can be sought from the parts of man: reason, arts, prudence, virtue, affection, custom, body, form, age, fortune, riches, economy, marriage, education of the children, politics, teaching, law, war, peace. These in turn can be divided according to *sententiae*, example, similarity, and species.[22]

In one brief passage Melanchthon includes the invention of topics, their distribution into certain classes, and the matter to be stored in them.

Chytraeus gives a similar exhortation to his students while discussing the utility of commonplace collections:

> It is indeed useful to have the common places of the principal arts distributed in a definite order, to which [places] the students will bring for noting down whatever they hear or read in the works of the authors that is worthy to be remembered.[23]

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22. "Nam et memoria adiuvabitur, cum ordine distribuerimus eas in certas classes, et haec distributio rerum inter se ordinem ostendet. . . . Optima autem in distribuendo Oeconomia erit, si sequemur artium discrimina. Cavendum est enim, ne confundantur artes, sed observandum, qui loci sint Theologici, qui sint Philosophici. Ac Philosophici possunt peti ex partibus hominibus. Ratio, Artes, Prudentia, Virtus, Affectus, Consuetudo, Corpus, Forma, Aetas, Fortuna, Divitiae, Oeconomia, Coniugium, Educatio liberorum, Politia, Magistratus, Lex, Bellum, Pax. Facile est autem genera partiri, et videre, quae sententiae, quae exempla, quae similitudines, in qua libet specie collocari debeant." *Ibid.*, p. 71.

23. "Valde utile est, locos communes precipuarum artium, certo ordine distributos habere, ad quos omnia, quae audiunt, aut in autorum scriptis legunt stuodiosi, memoria digna, annotent . . . ingentem copiam optimarum rerum et sententiarum, similitudinum, historiarum, . . . poterunt." Chytraeus, *op. cit.*, fol. D2 v.

If this method is followed, whenever occasion arises, the student will have "a great copiousness of the most distinguished things and sayings, of examples, and of histories."

The desire for copiousness of material became almost an obsession. One meets with the conviction that an abundance of books is needed from which to select commonplaces, or, that provisions must be stored for future use from many and various subjects which can be exploited for greater knowledge and erudition. The topics included such diverse matter as rare words, examples, philosophy, religion, phrases, the practical and liberal arts, witty sayings, daily conversations, letters, orations, diaries, and epithets. In this encyclopedic array of topics the basic notion of the traditional *locus communis* as a seat of arguments to be used in controversy or as a topic "common" to many causes has been lost sight of and the commonplaces are defined as "titles methodically arranged to which are transferred readings and reflections." [24] Eventually the commonplaces consume all knowledge, as when they are defined so as to include "the precepts of each liberal art arranged briefly and summarily as certain important headings and titles." [25] The judicial nature of the *locus communis* with its philosophical arguments and amplification of virtue or depreciating of vice is replaced by the more embellished characteristics of the demonstrative oration with its display of pseudo-learning and eloquence. Perhaps a Renaissance orator would have

24. ". . . tituli methodice dispositi, ad quos lecta et meditata referuntur." D. Bartholomew Keckermann, *D. Bartholomoei Keckermanni . . . In quo speciatim, methodice et uberrime de ethica, oeconomica, politica disciplina: nec non de arte rhetorica agitur, . . .* (Genevae, 1614), p. 488.

25. "Sunt enim loci communes nihil aliud quam doctrinae omnis liberalioris velut summa quaedam capita et tituli, parteque summatim et breviter designatae." *Ibid.*, p. 494.

considered this broadening concept of the commonplace an adaptation of classical theory to contemporary practice, or, as Douglas Bush expresses it, "a discovery, an assimilation, and a re-expression of the classics." [26]

Whatever the psychological theory implied by the commonplaces with their copiousness of material and ordered arrangement, the practical purpose of the collections becomes evident when one recalls that they grew primarily because of a pedagogical situation. The boys needed something to say and the excerpts from the authors of the past supplied that necessity, and, in addition, provided practice in the effective use of an unfamiliar language. But the commonplace collections did not remain in the classroom; they were carried over into later life.

Development of the powers of invention and disposition together with the acquisition of a general knowledge of all the arts and sciences seemed to be the most frequently repeated objectives of those encouraging the keeping of books of commonplaces. Erasmus places great value on the ready *copia* which the places supply and with which they enrich and amplify any speeech. Ascham, Bacon, and Alsted agree that the order and method used in supplying the notebooks result in greater diligence and method in study. The systematic arrangement of the places yields ready matter for extemporaneous speaking and enables one to speak aptly, eloquently, and ornately. The possessor of a commonplace book had access to a real thesaurus of learning; if he were a culture seeker, the books of courtesy, of conversational "gems," and the stylistic manuals for letter-writing would provide the pattern for fashioning his humanistic education. The abun-

26. Douglas Bush, *Classical Influences in Renaissance Literature* ("Martin Classical Lectures," Vol. XIII; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 5.

dance of moral precepts which these books contained made them doubly valuable to the Elizabethans who had a great love for sententious sayings of all kinds.

The use of the commonplace collections as an aid to memory is perhaps one of the key motives for the popularity and long endurance of such a method. The Renaissance man with his keen desire for a sort of universal knowledge realized that the natural memory could not be trusted to accommodate all that he would store there so he turned to the book of commonplaces which would serve as a substitute for the limited capacity of the natural memory.

The Renaissance concept of memory, if juxtaposed with the classical, appears in some ways very similar, yet in others quite different from the ancient one. The author of the *Ad Herennium,* and the Greek and Latin authors agree with him, calls memory the treasure house of ideas supplied by invention. Memory is of two kinds, the *natural,* imbedded in our minds and born simultaneously with thought, and the *artificial,* strengthened by the kind of training received and the discipline of exercise.[27] Quintilian considers the natural memory, or the memory of perceived things, the faithful guard of the thesaurus of eloquence. The artificial memory made use of backgrounds and images, or, of subject matter and words.[28]

The rhetoricians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also thought of memory as being of two kinds. Alsted in his discussion of the memory refers to the natural one as "primary" and to the artificial as "secondary" by which he means the commonplace books. These books of places act as a subsidiary or auxiliary to the primary memory and assist in recalling to mind what

27. *Ad Herennium* iii. 16. 28-29.
28. Quintilian *Inst.* xi. 2. 1.

may be forgotten. Alsted concludes his discourse on memory by saying that everything depends on the eagerness of all the powers in collecting the places, for in one book the student may come upon an entire library:

> For just as the stars are found each one in its own place, which is the sky, fishes each in its own place, which is water, so in the common places each subject is found distinctly and completely.[29]

"The strength of memory is determined by nature and art" ("mnemosynes virtus natura constat et arte") and the art has been placed in images which are stored in seats. This is Valerius's definition of memory with its twofold division: the natural, which is the strength situated in the mind and which perceives the object and keeps it easily and faithfully, and the artificial which is confirmed by precepts and stationed in images and places as if on charts and letters.[30] Valerius, too, is thinking of the commonplace in relation to artificial memory when he directs that the keeping of the places and images should not be restricted to the natural memory, that is learned by heart, but it should be extended to the artificial memory, that is, preserved in commonplace books.

Bacon refers indirectly to the association between the two memories:

> The same places which will help us to shake out the folds of the intellect within us, and to draw forth the knowledge stored therein, will also help us to gain knowledge from

29. "Sicut enim stellas suo in loco, qui est coelum pisces suo in loco, qui est aqua, inveniuntur: ita in locis communibus singula distincte et plene inveniuntur." Alsted, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

30. Valerius, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

without; . . . [so we should] in like manner, . . . select and peruse with advantage those authors, books, and parts of books, which may best instruct us concerning that which we seek.[31]

Bacon admits that a digest of commonplaces is a great help to memory because without its aid one cannot treat lengthy matters with accuracy:

I am aware that the transferring of the things we read and learn into common-place books is thought of by some to be detrimental to learning, as retarding the course of the reader and inviting the memory to take holiday. Nevertheless, as it is but a counterfeit thing in knowledge to be forward and pregnant, except a man be also deep and full, I hold diligence and labour in the entry of common places to be a matter of great use and support in studying; as that which supplies matter to invention, and contracts the sight of judgment to a point.[32]

Just what Bacon's real attitude towards the value of the commonplaces is would be difficult to determine since he frequently finds fault with their use. In his discussion of rhetoric in the *Advancement of Learning,* he criticizes their application to speeches:

Another is a lack I find in the exercises used in the universities, which do make too great a divorce between invention and memory; for their speeches are either premeditate in *verbis conceptis,* where nothing is left to invention, or merely extemporal, where little is left to memory.[33]

Bacon asks that better precepts and practices for strength-

31. Bacon, *Works,* Vol. IX, Bk. V. ch. 3, p. 86.
32. *Ibid.,* ch. 5, pp. 103-4.
33. *Ibid.,* Vol. VI, Bk. II, p. 179.

ening and enlarging the memory be set up instead of resorting to marvelous and prodigious memory feats which are only for ostentation and a "barren thing" for human use.

The concept of a natural and artificial memory was shared alike by the classical and Renaissance writers and both agreed that the natural one had to be strengthened and supported by the artificial. It is in the notion of the artificial memory, however, that the Renaissance method of training differs from the ancient. The father of the artificial memory is the famous Simonides, a lyric poet of the Island of Ceos who flourished about 535 B.C. and who is celebrated by both Cicero and Quintilian. He based his teaching on the association of things to be remembered with objects of the senses and this law of association has remained the groundwork for memory feats of all centuries. The setting up of a relationship between mental concepts and sensible objects was referred to as a "topical" memory in the Renaissance as well as in ancient Greece.[34]

The whole idea of artificial memory is based on the use of a repository, the substitution of a single image divisible into almost unlimited parts, for a set of ideas to be remembered. The Greeks and Romans, following the example of Simonides, used a house as such an image and placed within its compartments sets of symbols, each in its own order and place, which would aid them in recollecting the subject matter and words needed for their discourse. In the description of the artificial memory from the *Ad Herennium,* the author mentions the places

34. J. Millard, *The New Art of Memory* (London, 1812), pp. 4-5. See also Rosemary Freeman's *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), "Memory and Places," pp. 201-2, in which there is a discussion of the *Ars memoriativa* of the ancients.

and images which are used; these would be comparable to the various rooms and symbols in the imaginative house.[35] Cicero, too, writes of the localities in which the images are placed in ordered array.[36] All of this memory training, for the classical student and orator, took place within the mind and both places and images were mental.

The Renaissance student was likewise exercised in the development of an artificial memory, but his training ground was not the mental regions of the mind but the pages of his book of commonplaces, which became the repository of his rich store of invention. Instead of transferring the image of a house with its many compartments and symbols to the mind as representative of the ideas he wished to remember, the orator of the Elizabethan age transferred the symbol of an idea, the "image" of a word to the page of his book of places and divided it into as many "subject" and "analytic" topics as were needed. For an example, the concept of *Vice* was represented by the *word* or symbol "caught" in space on the page. The single "image" (to parallel with the classical notion) is the "subject" topic *Vice* which became the repository; the several compartments were the intrinsic and extrinsic places or the "analytic topics," examples, and quotations, which were collected for memory recall when speaking or writing of that particular topic.

The classical and Renaissance methods for strengthening the artificial memory are at first blush alike yet essentially different. The classical tradition with its concept of knowledge as situated within the confines of the mental regions is diametrically opposed to the Renaissance concept with its objective view of knowledge as contained in

35. *Ad Herennium* iii. 16-20, 29-34.
36. Cicero *De oratore* ii. 86. 353-54.

books. This diversity of outlook results from a change in the Renaissance approach to learning which has become more visile than audile.

2. LITTLE ORATIONS AND STYLISTIC DEVICES

In the discussion of the practical notions of the commonplace concerning its function of moving and delighting, one comes closer to the essential purpose of the *locus communis* in the special sense of a miniature oration for praising virtue or dispraising vice. The eloquent oration adorned with copiousness of matter, pleasing devices of diction and sententious maxims with which amplification embellished it, answered the requirements of the *locus communis* for moving and delighting. It is in the fulfillment of this purpose that the commonplace approaches the region of oratory and becomes, if not a "speech-within-a-speech," at least the proximate occasion for one.

The changing concept of the commonplace in Renaissance oratory from a judicial to a more rhetorical one has already been indicated. Training in theme-writing, based often on Aphthonius, had for its objective the preparation of the future orator for his later work of handling the emotional argument in the peroration, where the lawyer would seek to move the judge to condemn the accused, assuming the case proved and falling back on the arguments supplied by the denunciatory *locus communis* (comparsion, contrast, *sententiae*, conjectural, digression, exclusion of mercy, and so on). The application of the term *locus communis* to denunciation of vice and praise of virtue is for Aphthonius, Cicero, and Quintilian a special forensic argument. In a sense, each of the fourteen

themes qualifies as this sort of commonplace: proving a theme, developing a narrative, praise or dispraise, description; each of these are commonplaces for inventing an argument, and, in the judicial case, for moving a judge. These developed themes are studied somewhat detached from the formal oration.

Another idea of the commonplace, less connected with forensic argument, manifests itself, if not in the treatises on rhetoric, at least in the practical uses of it in both writing and speaking. Perhaps the earliest and best commentary on the *locus communis* as something other than a forensic argument is found in Veltkirchius's commentary on Erasmus's *De copia.* He speaks of two kinds of commonplaces, the forensic and the rhetorical; by the rhetorical commonplace he means the headings (he names 180) from which one can draw humanistic materials:

> I call the rhetorical commonplace not everything of the principal summaries from all the professions, but that which refers to the study of culture, as the poetical, historical, and oratorical profession, and particularly moral philosophy. For it would be an endless and immense task if you tried to collect all the places of eloquence and the arts, the principal headings into one commentary. Therefore, in the last analysis, we should select those headings, as I have said, which are most useful in our study of the humanities; as for the rest let us leave them as their own prerogative to theologians, lawyers, physicians, naturalists, mathematicians because a few and definite topics are far more satisfactory. . . . As for the rest, there is a triple manner of treating the commonplace, namely, the youthful, the dialectical, and the rhetorical.[37]

37. "Voco autem rhetoricum locum communem non quodlibet principium incomplexum ex quavis professione, sed id demum quod spectat ad humanitatis studia, nempe ad professionem poeticam, historicam, & oratoricam, & praecipue ad philosophiam moralem. Nam infinitum esset, & immensum opus, si congerere coneris omnes omnium facultatum, &

Veltkirchius points out that Erasmus made up his book primarily for little boys at St. Paul's. He continues:

> The treatment is youthful when under the title of some commonplace, the young student collects as propositions: examples, *sententiae,* and maxims, pertaining to the same place, from whatever good writers he pleases. The student makes use of this method who assembles poetic Polyanthea, according to the order of the alphabet, and then composes an explication of the poets. . . . I call this place [type of treatment] youthful because it is used more profitably by youths unskilled as yet in dialectic and rhetoric, and for the boys, especially if there is not any commentary in which they may write sententiae of this kind for purposes of memorizing.[38]

Throughout the commentary Veltkirchius stresses supplying the writer with an abundance of material for blowing up his subject.

In addition to the rhetorical treatment of the commonplace, which differed little from the dialectical, Veltkirchius mentions the exercise of elocution:

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artium locos, principia, & capita in unum commentarium. Seligenda sunt ergo demum capita, ut dixi, quorum est plurimus usus in nostris studiis humanioribus; reliqua vero, hoc est, sua permittamus theologis, iureconsultis, medicis, phisicis, & mathematicis, & quidem longe satius est paucos, certosque; . . . Caeterum triplex est modus tractandi locum communem scilicet iuvenilis, dialecticus, rhetoricus . . ." Des. Erasmi Rote., *De duplici copia verborum et rerum,* comentarii duo . . . (London, 1569) (Short Title Catalogue 10472), ff. 154 r-v and 155 v. The above quotation is from Veltkirchius's commentary which was printed for the first time in 1536.

38. "Tractatio iuvenilis est cum titulo alicuius loci communis, vel theseos congerit studiosus iuvenis exempla, sententias, et autoritates ad eundem locum pertinentes ex quibuslibet bonis autoribus qua ratione utitur ille, qui rapsodiam collegit Polyantheam, secundum ordinum alphabeti, & qui elucidarium poetarum composuit. . . . Voco autem hunc locum tractandi iuvenilem, qua utiliter permittitur imperitis adhuc dialecticae, & rhetoricae iuvenibus, et pueris, adeo praesertim, ut si non iam commentario, qua ipsi memoriae inscribant ciusmodi sententias . . ." *Ibid.,* fol. 155 v.

> . . . but in elocution rhetoric demands (a style) which is far more copious and more brilliant with its embellishments, amplifications, circumstances, comparisons, and other schemes of things, and very often Cicero inserted places, illustrious themes, and amplifications in his own orations.[39]

This Erasmus-Veltkirchius concept of the commonplace with its emphasis on elocution or copiousness seems to be quite different from the Aphthonian-Cicero-Quintilian forensic commonplace. In this situation the *locus communis* is no longer a place for storing *arguments* but rather a place for storing *dilations* and *expansions* of a theme. The *De copia* is to furnish the boys with copious matter for making their themes ample and verbose, since their memories are not as yet stored with words, sentences, and examples. This kind of rhetoric is general, not forensic, and treats of the universal knowledge of the humanist. The *locus communis* becomes a kind of treasure chest of varied and ample words, *sententiae,* and examples for making one's statement full. The first lessons in rhetoric were based on the *De copia,* one of the most commonly used texts in Renaissance grammar schools, and it covered *elocutio* (*De copia verborum* or varying one's expression) and *inventio* (which in this instance becomes *De copia rerum,* finding abundance of matter). Not the orator, but the humanist, a man given more to writing, is the setting of this more strictly rhetorical view of the commonplace which seemed to delight in eloquence and

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39. ". . . sed tantum eloquutione, quam requirit rhetorica longe copiosiorem, magisque illustratam expolitionibus, amplificationibus, circumstantiis, comparatonibus, & caeteris rerum schematis & saepissime Cicero suis orationibus inserit locos, & theses illustres, & amplificatis." *Ibid.,* fol. 157 v.

copiousness more for its own sake than for persuading a judge in forensic causes.

Exercises for copia.—"Anyone who wishes to be thought learned must first collect for himself as many places as possible." This is the initial instruction which Erasmus gives the little boys who are beginning their acquisition of *copia.* These places may be taken partly from the divisions of virtues and vices, partly from those things which are chiefly in affairs of mortals and which are frequently accustomed to come into persuasion. The subjects taken aside from the virtues and vices will pertain to examples and to commonplaces. Under examples Erasmus names: renowned long age, youthful old age, remarkable good fortune, memory, sudden change, sudden death, suicide, strange death, renowned eloquence, wealth, and crafty ingenuity. For each of these, the boy is to select the things which are contrary, and the things which are related. For example, if the place *eloquence* is chosen, the contrary topic would be *lack of eloquence,* and a related topic would be *harmony in speech, skill in acting,* or *gesturing.* Such lessons as this are the beginnings which are later applied to the more lengthy and formal speech.[40]

The two exercises which promised the most abundant *copia* were the example and the *sententia.* Erasmus advised using examples which were adaptable to any cause "whether you weigh a matter carefully, exhort or console, praise or blame." In the section "Ratio colligendi exempla" of Book II of the *De copia,* Erasmus names several instances for varying examples so as to build up copiousness in the theme. The examples may be taken from the divisions of the poets: comic, tragic, epigrammatic, bucolic,

40. Erasmus, *De copia,* Lib. II, "Ratio colligendi exempla," p. 100.

heroic; they may be selected from the "places" which concern diversities of nationalities with their kinds and customs, from the condition of persons, and from the talk of the populace. Each of these principal topics has, in turn, a great variety of other "places" which might be used for "heaping up" matter. The various kinds of examples which Erasmus names are fable, parable, dream, praise or blame, and *sententiae*. The *sententiae* are distinguished as *judiciales*—those which are collected from writers noted for their renown, wisdom, and the like, such as proverbs, apophthegms; *sententiae*—not sought from writers but adapted by use or invented by the boys for present need and used to move the hearers. Other examples may be taken from embellishing, fictitious narratives, and theological allegories.[41]

The *sententia,* in the sense of a maxim or aphorism, the second method for securing *copia,* is called a *locus communis* by Erasmus. A long list of these *sententiae* is given to prove to the boys what a great treasure lies in such a collection—"Offense is easy, reconciliation difficult," "It is safest to believe no one," and "He gives twice who gives quickly." Other "places" are applied to these such as example, comparison, and the praise of virtue. Careful directions for assembling the *sententiae* are given:

> Lest such an arranged crowd of things cause confusion, use titles as inclusive as possible. Then assemble the titles, whatever will be sufficient, and in whatever order you wish to arrange them. Put down under each one its own parts, add to the parts the commonplaces, or *sententiae,* for whatever will be encountered, in any authors, es-

41. *Ibid.,* pp. 90-99.

pecially if it is renowned. You will put down in its own place the story, fable, example, strange cause, *sententia,* metaphor, and parable.[42]

When the speech has been embellished by the insertions of these commonplaces, another kind of *sententia* is used which the Greeks call *epiphonema* and which Quintilian and the Renaissance writers refer to as *acclamatio.* This figure is the final acclamation that is the cry of assent to or approval of the thing narrated or proved.[43] This kind of *sententia* is suited to epigrams, as in the one about the ewe which nourished a wolf's whelp, "Nature is never subverted in its functions." [44] From these few illustrations taken out of Erasmus, there is evidence that in the early years of school much emphasis was placed on securing an abundance of matter and applying it to every form of exercise.

The writing of epigrams in a variety of forms was another means of expanding a theme in rhetoric. The procedure consisted in providing a proverb or phrase, such as "Time, the devourer of things" ("Tempus edax rerum"), which had to be restated, or given application and content. The second step was to paraphrase or make variation of a complete epigram from the *Greek Anthology,* from Martial, or from other classical authors. This

42. "Verum ne indigesta rerum turba pariat confusionem, profuerit titulos qui latius patent, in aliquot secare partes. . . . Ergo posteaquam tibi titulos compararis, quot erunt singulis, eosque in ordinem quem voles digesseris, deinde singullis suas partes subjecceris, rursum partibus addideris locos communes, sive sententias, jam quicquid usquam obvium erit, in ullis auctoribus praecipue si sit insignus, mox suo loco annotabis, sive erit fabula, sive apologus, sive exemplum, sive casus novus, sive sententia, sive metaphora, aut parabola." Erasmus, *De copia,* Lib. II, p. 101.

43. *Ibid.,* p. 97.

44. Erasmus, *Adagia,* II, 442.

meant phrasing the thought in Latin verse, in varying meters, and giving different versions. This exercise of varying the sentence in as many ways as possible, extending the paraphrase, and changing the meter provided ample practice in *copia*.[45] Scaliger in *Poetices libri septem* associated the epigrams with oratory when he discussed them according to the Aristotelian division of speeches, judicial, suasory, and demonstrative. In the Appendix, several species of epigrams are given which are related to the emotional effect produced: the first species is that in which there is honey *(mel),* that is, "which has nothing except praise and encomium"; the second, that in which there is gall *(fel),* "as when we openly dispraise, abuse, and revile." Scaliger lists the places through which epigrams may be derived as the same from which arguments arise, the intrinsic and extrinsic; each place is defined and several epigrams relating to it are given.[46] The Renaissance instructors gave distinction to this figure of amplification; they thought of it as being intellectual, rhetorical, and conscious, that is, addressed to stir in the hearer an approval of the art. It was written to be heard and always carried with it a touch of epideictic rhetoric, the touch of display which frequently had as well the persuasive purpose.

A quotation from the life of Blessed Edmund Campion, a schoolmaster at Prague in 1574, shows how this training in *copia* fit in with the teaching of rhetoric:

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45. Hoyt Hopewell Hudson, *The Epigram in the English Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 48.

46. Nicolaus Mercurius, *De conscribendo epigrammate opus curiosum . . .* (Parisiis, 1653). In Chapters IV and V, Mercurius treats of Scaliger's division and use of epigrams. Quoting: "Prima species . . . in qua est mel, hoc est, quae nihil habet praeter laudes et encomia," p. 14; "secunda species . . . in qua fel, ut cum aperte obiurgamus, obtrectamus, et maledicimus," p. 14; ". . . quarta species . . . in qua est sal, cum risum captamus sine ulla vituperatione aut certe absque multa mordacitate," p. 15.

> In class, he first made the scholars repeat a passage which they had learned out of school hours; then the monitors collected the written exercises, which he looked over and corrected. While he was thus occupied, the boys were trying to imitate a passage of a poet or an orator, which he had set them, or to write a brief account of a garden, a church, a storm, or any other visible object; to vary a sentence in all possible ways; to translate it from one language into another; to write epigrams, inscriptions, epitaphs; to collect phrases from good authors; or to collect all the topics or commonplaces that are applicable to it.[47]

Reading, writing, and assembling an abundance of literary wealth seemed to be the burden of the boy's school day. It is not surprising, in the light of this constant drill, that the same rhetorical devices manifested themselves in the literature of the period, sometimes consciously, and, at other times, when skillfully integrated with the piece of art, scarcely noticeable.

A convincing illustration of the use of copiousness by a "heaping up" of variations of a theme is found in one of the sonnets of Thomas Watson, which can be matched with hundreds of other similarly contrived verses:

> Love is a sour delight, a sug'red grief,
> A living death, an ever-dying life,
> A breach of reason's law, a secret thief,
> A sea of tears, an everlasting strife,
> A bait for fools, a scourge of noble wits,
> A deadly wound, a shot which ever hits.
> Love is a blinded god, an angry boy,
> A labyrinth of doubts, an idle lust,
> A slave to beauty's will, a witless toy.[48]

47. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 152, quoting from Simpson's *Life of Campion* quoted by Watson, *English Grammar Schools to* 1660, pp. 105-6.

48. Thomas Watson, *Poems,* ed. Edward Arber (English Reprints; London, 1870), "Passionate Century of Love" (1582), Sonnet XVIII, p. 54.

Lexicons as thesauri of places.—One of the most fruitful sources for a rich abundance of information and stylistic devices was a collection of lexicons generally found in the library attached to the schools. Hoole notes the usefulness of Cooper's *Thesaurus* and also of the proper-name dictionary of Carolus Stephanus which he recommends for the fourth and fifth forms in his curriculum. He considers these two lexicons, as well as Robertus Stephanus's *Thesaurus,* works helpful and necessary to scholars in performing their tasks "with more ease and benefit." [49] These dictionaries, like the treatises on schemes and tropes and like the commonplace books of Erasmus and the *Polyanthea* of Mirabellius, were constantly consulted because of the Renaissance method of pedagogy which emphasized repetitious parsing, the elucidation of proper names, a detailed analysis of devices of ornamentation, and similar exercises in prelection, imitation and paraphrase.

Cooper enumerates the uses of his *Thesaurus* as learning accent and pronunciation, and acquiring information about the various meanings, uses, and constructions of Latin words, elegant phrases, and metaphors. He designed his book particularly for teachers who were anxious for their students to acquire *copia.* Consequently, the student would find in the thesaurus a sort of commonplace book that would contribute to a collection destined to aid the writer in varying and expanding his discourse with pithy sentences, impressive examples, and apt phrases:

> Last of all, a studious young man, with small paines, by the helpe of thys booke may gather to himselfe good furni-

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49. Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School,* pp. 205 and 324, quoted in Starnes and Talbert, *Classical Myth and Legend in Renaissance Dictionaries,* pp. 18-19.

ture both of wordes and approved phrases and fashions of speaking for any thing, that he shall eyther write or speake of, and so make unto his use, as it were, a common-place booke for such a purpose.[50]

Cooper chooses a "matter of smaler use and copie" as an illustration of how fully his lexicon might aid the writer. He takes the subject of shooting, the words *arcus* and *sagitta,* and the phrases which go with them, and demonstrates, with a passage of more than two hundred and fifty words how "this store and furniture" may be procured by the students. The text of the *Thesaurus* gives ample proof of the "copy," that is, the variety and abundance of the matter, with which young scholars were supplied.[51]

The *Polyanthea* of Mirabellius cannot be overlooked in this treatment of copiousness since it was equally as popular and well worn as the lexicons. This common-place collection is, in fact, a dictionary of sorts with the places or terms arranged in alphabetic order. Under each heading is the definition of that word or heading and its etymology followed by a long list of examples, phrases, figures of style, and, at times, emblems in "word pictures." One instance taken from this thesaurus is *locus communis* which is defined as being of two kinds, a place which is "common," that which walks about all the body, the other, "proprius," which walks about the first. After the definition, the examples are listed: *loci biblici,* biblical sentences, sentences of the Fathers, sentences of the poets, philosophical sentences, political sentences, apophthegms,

50. Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus linguae Romanae et Britannicae, tam accurate congestus, ut nihil pene in eo desyderari possit, quod vel Latine complectatur amplissimus Stephani thesaurus, vel Anglice . . .* (Impressum Londini, 1573), Sig. 4 v.

51. *Ibid.*

similes, examples, emblems, adages, fables, and hieroglyphics. The reference given with these examples is accompanied by the name of the author, the work in which the quotation is located, and the chapter and page. Synonyms are listed at the end of all this. When the emblem is included in the information contained within the place or "subject" heading, the author is named, the picture described, and the accompanying verse given.[52] With such books of comprehensive information available, the student and orator must have enriched many a theme and speech with copious eloquence. And with such a collection, how easily one could assume the reputation of being a classical scholar.

The commonplace as a principle of amplification.— The training in *copia* which occupied the first years of the grammar school served as a preparation for the more artistic process of amplification. The invention of *sententiae,* examples, figures of style, and the collection of commonplaces for developing a theme all looked toward the building of the future oration which by its pleasing form and moral content would serve to move the hearer. Because the amplifying of a theme always looked to the emotional effect produced on the audience, it was closely related to the commonplace.

Amplification is defined in the *Ad Herennium* as the principle of using the commonplace to stir the hearers and is found under the subheading Conclusion (its proper place in a judicial speech). The author of this work invented ten *loci communes* which were to be used for am-

52. Mirabellius, *Mirabellio Dominico Nono, novissima polyanthea in libros XX dispertita,* opus praeclorum, suavissimas floribus celebriorum sententiarum, cum graecarum, latinarum refertum . . . (Francofurti, 1617 ed.), pp. 803 ff.

plification of a topic: authority, who is affected, effects of such indulgence, others emboldened to do the same, a judgment not revocable, an intentional crime committed with premeditation, foul, cruel, sacrilegious, unique crime and must be avenged, comparison of this with other wrongs, enumeration of attendant circumstances and appeal for pity.[53] Thus in amplification like in "copy" one achieves a "full" effect by exploiting the places—for the classical orator this meant the *loci argumentorum* for the general thesis, and the "circumstances" for the particular. For the Renaissance man, the places of humanistic knowledge with their store of sententious wisdom would be sought.

The quest for amplitude as the Renaissance understood it first developed chiefly in the homiletics of Christianity, in the expounding of Holy Scripture, and passed on to the other literary arts in the "artes concionandi" and, particularly, in the "artes poeticae." The numerous places for developing a theme came from the *prae exercitamina* of the ancient schools under such topics as prosopopoeia, description, comparison, contrary, and embellishing. Vestiges of these medieval processes for dilation are found in the *De copia* of Erasmus. However, he modifies the conflation of poetic and homilitec theories of the medieval writer by his knowledge of ancient literature and rhetoric. Erasmus made use of the same places for amplification but changed his concept of it to agree with that of the ancient rhetoricians. The medievals measured the importance and effect of dilating by the *length* of the discourse; Erasmus placed emphasis on the *force* of an expression, not its *size*. Consequently, great

53. *Ad Herennium* ii. 30. 47-48.

care was taken that the speeches be sprinkled generously with sententious matter of all kinds.[54]

For the Renaissance orator every plan for persuading and moving the listeners lay in the places containing the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice. This was the essence of eloquence, and all else that was added—the tropes and schemes of stylistic diction, the rhythmic patterns of words, or copious invention of any kind—was directed towards embellishing and adorning the proverbs, maxims, and *sententiae*. These moral sayings became the figures of thought which "lent credibility to the arguments and stole their way secretly into the minds of the audience." [55] They were the chief adornments of speech.

The amplifying of a subject, then, would include both copiousness and sententious quotations from the ancient moral lore. There is something of Longinus's notion of amplification in the Renaissance use of it: "Amplification consists in accumulating all the aspects and topics inherent in the subject and thus strengthening the argument by dwelling upon it." But this is not the sole purpose, "Amplification is language which invests the subject with grandeur . . . there are indeed ten thousands kinds of amplification . . . without the sublime, none form the perfect whole." [56] The sententious insertions into the speech formed for the Renaissance man the "sublime" grandeur of which Longinus speaks.

When considering the figures to be collected which adorned the oration and made it more copious, Melanchthon thought of the commonplaces. He cited instances

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54. George J. Englehardt, "Medieval Vestiges in the Rhetoric of Erasmus," *PMLA,* LXIII (1948), 739-44.

55. Quintilian, *Inst.* ix. 1. 20-21.

56. Longinus, *Longinus on the Sublime,* trans. A. O. Prickard (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. 26-28.

from Cicero, Isocrates and Demosthenes, who frequently drew out whole commonplaces for proving major premises.[57] Hoskyns and Blount recognize that "to amplifie and illustrate" are the two principal ornaments of eloquence and that they "gain men's mindes to the chiefest advantages, Admiration and Belief" (delight and move).[58] A threefold use of the commonplace is included in amplification according to Peacham who states its purpose: "to teach and tell things plainly, to amplify largely, and to prove and conclude mightily." The subject matter is nothing more than a catalog of the affections which tend to virtue or vice, and the places from which the orator might "fetch these causes" were those which were commendable and merited high praise or those which were abominable and deserved punishment. Peacham suggests such topics as noble and famous enterprises, great and worthy virtues, wicked and horrible facts, as murders, parricides, tyranny and slaughter.[59]

The places most commonly mentioned in connection with the expansion of a theme were distribution, description, collection, and comparison. Progression and acclamation were frequently included as offshoots of collection and comparison. Blount defines progression as the exercise by which one begins at the lowest, when he would praise or "discommend" someone, and moves to the highest. Under this he considers the "circumstances" both of persons and things. Acclamation is called a "sententious clause of a discourse, or a report. . . . It is a general instruction for every man commonly for his pains in reading

57. Melanchthon, *Elementorum rhetorices,* pp. 114-20.

58. John Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style,* ed. Hoyt Hudson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1935), p. 17, and Blount, *op. cit.,* p. 11.

59. Peacham, *op. cit.,* pp. 121-22.

a History, or other men's Books for some private use of it to himself." It only serves for amplification "when after a great crime or Defect exclaim'd upon, or extoll'd, it gives a moral Note worth credit and observation." [60] Blount adds an example of this type which is referred to Scipio Africanus:

> So little need has he to stoop to private cares, that thrives upon publick victories; and so small leasure has he to be desirous of riches, that hath been so long possest and satisfied with honor which is the immortal end of mortal actions.[61]

Blount calls such moral applications "scraps of policy which some now-a-days gather out of Polybius and Tacitus, and not unlike are the Morals that hang upon *Esops Fables.*" [62] According to his judgment, amplification is served only by moral precepts.

Hoskyns speaks in a somewhat lighter vein when he calls the popular fashion of sententiousness "schisms of eloquence" and the repeated use of the same figure nothing more than the imitation by brave wits of some great personage:

> It is true that we study according to the predominancy of courtly inclinations: whilst mathematics were in requests, all our similitudes came from lines, circles, and angles; whilst moral philosophy is now awhile spoken of, it is rudeness not to be sententious. . . . Let our age, therefore, only speak morally, and let the next age live morally.[63]

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60. Blount, *op. cit.*, p. 22
61. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

The significance underlying the Renaissance vogue for moral platitudes is perhaps deeper than Hoskyns admits, even though it often had to be content to mean nothing more than an extra coat applied to a veneer of learning.

The forcefulness of expression by which Erasmus distinguished the medieval lengthy discourse from the Renaissance oration has its foundations in the classical attitude towards the aphorisms, epigrams, and proverbs of ancient wisdom. The *sententiae* were associated with the aphorism which derived its original meaning (an utterance resembling decrees or resolutions of public bodies) from the Greek and Latin writers. Such an expression added weight and dignity to a speech and reflected favorably on the character of the speaker. Quintilian uses the *sententiae* in the manner of aphorisms and refers to them as gems of wisdom, as forms of ornaments which many regard as the chief, and almost the sole adornment of oratory.[64] The various heads under which Quintilian classifies *sententiae* correspond in part to the topics used for amplification—interrogation, comparison, denial, similarity, admiration, opposition, direct statement, from general to particular—and indicate that the *sententiae* must have been thought of as potential orations.

The same respect and admiration which characterized the classical attitude towards the ornaments of amplification prevailed in the Renaissance. Figures of thought, which included the sentences of moral value and the topics to be sought in amplifying a theme, were a prominent part of the manuals of style. They were the embryos which would in time develop into full-grown orations. Richard Rainolde defines a sentence as:

64. Quintilian *Inst.* viii. 5. 1-5.

> A sentence is an Oracion, in fewe woordes, shewyng a godlie precept of life, exhorting or diswadyng: the Grekes dooe call godly preceptes, by the name of Gnome, or Gnomon, whiche is asmoche to saie, a rule or square, to direct any thyng by, for by them, the life of manne is framed to all singularitie. Thei are divers sortes of sentences, one exhorteth, an other diswadeth, some onely sheweth: there is a sentence simple, compounde, profitable, true, and soche like. Frame your Oracion upon a sentence, as in the Oracion before.[65]

The "places" through which the sentence is to be amplified are the same as for the chria: (1) praise of the author, (2) exposition of the sentence, (3) confirmation in the strength of the cause, (4) conference, of the contrary, (5) similitude, (6) example, (7) testimony of authors, (8) conclusion. The sentence has a more universal application than the chria which Rainolde defines as "a rehersall in few wordes of any ones deed, or of the saying of any man, upon the whiche an oracion maie be made." The "small matter of difference" between the two is that the chria always has the name of the author accompanying the praise.[66]

The didactic element of the *sententiae* as well as their adornment of the speech and their adaptability to the topics for amplification invested them with something of the nature of the *locus communis:* in fact, they were generally thought of as *loci communes* and applied universally to all literary forms, spoken or written, declamatory or expository. In their application, they were more often expanded as little declamations in praise of virtue or dispraise of vice—in the Renaissance, however, the praise or

65. Rainolde, *op. cit.,* fol. xx r.
66. *Ibid.*

blame did not always refer to virtue and vice; it could be a lady's eyes or the delights of love.

The commonplace in literary forms.—The commonplaces, whether dialectical or rhetorical, or both, were considered an essential part of every form of communication, not only as adornment in pieces of literary prose or poetry. In epistolary literature, which was one of the early exercises in the grammar schools, the stylistic tropes and schemes as well as the sententious figures for amplification were applied as effectively as in the more formal orations. Cicero was the primary classical model upon which were based the Renaissance formularies: Erasmus, Macropedius, Blount, Day, and Fulwood were the best known models.

Day and Fulwood treated the letter as a special oration partaking of all the rhetorical embellishments attributed to any speech. Angel Day classifies epistles according to the various kinds of orations: horatory, dehortatory, laudatory, consolatorie, and invective, and he divides each letter according to the five parts of the oration. Invention must search and consider what kind of matter is to be used, what variety of *sententiae,* what sorts of figures, and how many similitudes, diminutions, insinuations, and circumstances are needed. Elocution supplies the efficacy of the message by a "neat, pure and elegant" language.[67]

Fulwood differs somewhat from Day in his classification but the same underlying notion of handling the letter as an oration is present and influences his discussion. Fulwood names the diverse kinds of letters as theological, of manners and virtues, of peace, war, and government, and of recommendations—love, admonitions, domestic affairs.

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67. Day, *The English Secretorie,* pp. 3 and 8-9.

His instruction as to the parts of a letter is based on the purpose involved and has some similarity to development through "places":

> Letters of request have four parts:
> 1) Praise of the benevolence of a person, his virtue
> 2) Obtaining of his good will
> 3) Showing that the cause is just
> 4) Promise of some remuneration
>
> Demonstrative letters have three parts: (written in praise of one)
> 1) Declaration of one's insufficiency in the ability to describe the virtues and declaration that to do so one must be able to surmount all eloquent rhetoric
> 2) Declaration of one of the virtues of him who is praised
> 3) Statement that the things which are written are of small matter compared with those which might be written [68]

These epistles may begin with "a perfect sentence," an aphorism or a common proverb, if it is in keeping with the purpose of persuading or dissuading. The conclusion is made in three ways, either by amplification and enlarging, by commiseration and pity, or by epilog and brief rehearsal. If the consideration in the petition be added to these headings mentioned above—that the request be just and possible—we have most of the characteristics of the commonplace. Every letter, according to Fulwood, must teach, delight, and move; or, as Fulwood expresses it, every letter is of doctrine, expressing all good and evil things; it is of mirth, comforting and rejoicing, getting good will and benevolence; and each one is of gravity,

68. William Fulwood, *The Enimie of Idlenesse:* Teaching the maner and style how to endite, compose, and write all sorts of Epistles and Letters as well by answer, as otherwise . . . (Imprinted at London, 1568), p. 33.

it contains moral or civil matters. The intimate association between the conception of a letter and an oration is shown further in the purpose of amplification which is "to move the audience to mirth and indignation or sometimes to pity, and to increase terms and phrases." [69] The oratorical tradition which was imbibed with the first lessons in rhetoric and dialectic remained very real to the Renaissance author, so that, even when writing, his literary productions assumed the form of orations or dialogue of some kind. So Fulwood, in writing epistles, thinks of delighting and moving his "audience."

The application of the commonplace method to the composing of sermons was another manifestation of the practical value derived from the exercises of *copia* and amplification. In this area, the places deviate somewhat from the classical heritage and with decorous appropriateness become the topics of Holy Scripture and theology. Andreas Hyperius, a preacher of the sixteenth century, sees no difficulty in amplifying one or two *loci communes* to such an extent that they contain the whole explanation of Scripture:

> Sometime the whole explanation of Scripture is aptly distributed into two or three Chapters, or partes, or common places (it maketh no great matter how we tearme them). Yea now and then also thou maist see the whole divine redynge, with all the partes thereof, to be directed to a more ample explication of one only common place.[70]

The places are equally necessary in handling a divine sermon:

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69. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

70. Andreas Hyperius, *The Practice of Preaching*, otherwise called the Pathway to the Pulpet: . . . (First written in Latin by Hyperius and then Englished by John Ludham; London, 1577), fol. 54 r.

> Certain places ought alwayes to be in a redines, by the order and direction whereof thou mayst finde out and (as it were) drawe out of coverte into light as well the thinges that are convenient to the explycation and illustratinge of thy purpose, as also those thinges that are knowne to be avaleable to the edification of the hearers.[71]

In this description of the commonplace Hyperius is peculiarly Renaissance in his attitude. The very term *locus communis* has lost something of its original implication and can stand now as the name of a chapter, or as a part of one. In this sense it simply indicates a repository of some kind. For preaching, the places are arranged in orderly manner and material is drawn out from them for amplifying, delighting, and edifying the listeners.

The places of invention which Hyperius names are: Faith, Love, and Hope, and each of these is subdivided into other places with the caution to avoid "divers darke and perplexed places." In addition to these there are *Divine places,* which are profitable but not always fit to be expounded, *Various places,* which suit the time and need, and *Orations,* made of virtues and against vices. There are other places from which preachers may borrow certain reasons and arguments having to do with the affective nature of man—places apt to provoke grief and indignation for offences committed, places to the stirring up of love (six of these are causes, places of circumstances, accidents, antecedents, adjunct, consequent), and places to move men to compassion. Each one of these has its own topics through which the theme is to be taken, for example, the places for stirring up of love are twelve in number, those for moving men to compassion, eighteen.[72]

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71. *Ibid.,* fol. 54 v.
72. *Ibid.,* ff. 45 r-48 r.

The development of a theme for a sermon, if following these topics, must have been proportionately lengthy. Hyperius mentions definite places to be used for amplification (very similar to Sherry's): *Words,* the preacher may use all the furniture that the schools of the orators offer him—expolition, definition, description, distribution, heaping up of material; *Things,* the speaker may pass from a definite question to an infinite question or commonplace such as cause, matter, form, effect, end; *Circumstances,* these follow the regular ones from classical rhetoric; *Comparisons,* and whatever rhetoricians use—similitudes, contentions, contraries.[73] Like so many other Renaissance contemporaries, Hyperius tried to include all the places in his instructions for the preacher and thus expand the sermon from a simple exhortation into a rhetorical declamation.

William Fenner's book of sermons is topically composed but with a view to a more logical method of presentation. Each theme or quotation is developed according to a fixed pattern beginning with the statement of the doctrine, followed by reasons, use, objections, and answers. Fenner refers to Aristotle's causes for expansion and enumeration. For example, thoughts become vain in respect to matter, form, efficient, and end. Other places used are kind, quantity, quality, time, place, and these are equivalent to some of the places of circumstances.[74]

Collections of sermons were as numerous as the preachers who delivered them and as filled with commonplaces of all kinds as the books of rhetoric. Latimer, Foxe, Jewell, and Hall are some of the more familiar names at-

73. *Ibid.,* ff. 38r-v.

74. William Fenner, *A Treatise of the Affections or, the Soul's Pulse,* Vol. I, and *XXIX Choice Sermons on severall texts of Scripture,* Vol. II (London, 1657).

tached to these collections whose sermons provide lasting evidence of the universality of the "commonplace" method. The numerous books available with their collection of theological *loci communes* offered a rich storehouse of wisdom and eloquence to the zealous preacher who desired to impress and persuade his listeners. One interesting thesaurus filled with *sententiae* from the Greek authors is that of John Stobaeus. Included in this book are one hundred eighty sermons on moral, oeconomical, and political themes, each of which is generously embellished with gnomes, apophthegms, and chria, "flowers and gems of the mind" as Stobaeus calls them. The fonts of virtue are wisdom *(scientia),* power *(potentia),* and free will (*voluntas*) and these three are related to theology. The sermons, as the title page and index show, are referred to as *loci communes.*[75]

The *locus communis* is rightly described by the Renaissance writers as "walking under the vault of the sky" with its comprehensive area of application. There is scarcely an occasion of speaking or writing when the commonplace is not sought for and applied to the discourse. The places were not only literary ornaments but practical counsels in their statements of universal truths upon which they were based. Because of the value which the commonplaces afforded, digests and collections of all kinds were made so that the practical humanist and the student of good literature could discourse fluently and eloquently whether in declamation, conversation, or composition of familiar letters. There were digests and paraphrases by contemporary men for acquiring abundance of such matter. Lyly's *Euphues* is filled with maxims on education, collections of commonplaces on youth, friendship, woman,

75. Stobaeus, *op. cit.,* pp. 2 and 8.

and love. Lodge, Nashe, Dekker, Breton, and Greene are only a few of the many who had such collections. For a store of aphorisms there were Elyot's *Banquet of Sapience,* Florio's *Firste Fruites,* and Baldwin's *Treatise of Moral Philosophy.* The sententious sayings were a distinctive characteristic of the literary style and their importance is attributed to the extraordinary influence which people ascribed to moral sentences. The classics were the works most popularly used in seeking moral platitudes; their wealth of practical wisdom was always appealing.

IV

Virtue and Vice in the Commonplace Tradition

The early definitions and the ancient concepts of the commonplace relate it to the science of moral philosophy. The most frequent use of the *topos* or *locus communis* was in the praise of virtue and the dispraise of vice, a fact which made it of such a universal character that it could influence every man: the orator, the judge, and the audience. The *locus communis* could be brought into every kind of oration—political, forensic, and epideictic—and whether its appeal was to the legislator, the judge, or the popular audience, the purpose was always the same, to teach virtue and to move to action. Because of its serious moral content, the *locus communis* was embellished with all the dignity which the adornments of rhetoric could offer. The commonplace, then, in its early tradition was closely allied to virtue and vice; it was universal in character and applicable to all orations and to all audiences, and, because of its moral teaching, was distinguished by the embellishments and adornments of style.

The classical writers of ancient Greece, as well as the masters and pedagogues in the schools, emphasized the necessity of training in the moral virtues. Consequently, the association of virtue with rhetorical training, and its use of the *topos,* was but another aspect of the insistence on morals in education. Isocrates, attempting to restore the moral excellence of the rhetorical commonplaces, abandoned by the Sophists, set out to develop the humanistic man endowed with moral and cultural virtues. This ancient Greek rhetorician believed that constant handling of the *topoi,* the places of moral content and universal import, would assure the orator of a virtuous character and increase his influence over the audience. Aristotle considered the knowledge and practice of virtue essential for everyone but especially for the orator. A careful study of the virtues and their relation with the emotions was necessary if the speaker wished to realize the desired effect on his audience. But this was not all. The orator himself must appear as a man possessing virtue as well as intelligence and good will.[1] The theme of virtue and vice is predominant in the three kinds of orations, as Aristotle describes them in his *Rhetoric:* the *political,* through exhortation and dehortation persuades to the happiness of a good life; the *forensic,* through accusation and defence secures justice; the *epideictic,* through praise of virtue and censure of vice persuades to an honorable and ethical life. Since the *topoi* or *loci communes* were the principal arguments for every kind of discourse, they would be the means by which virtue would be taught.

The Romans had a regard for morality similar to that of the Greeks. The *De officiis* of Cicero is nothing more

1. Aristotle *Rhetorica* i. 2. 1356 a.

than a detailed exposition of the moral virtues, their duties, and their application to a good life (in Cicero's sense—that all virtue lies in action). An analysis of the virtues was an important part of Cicero's rhetorical theory, the *De inventione*. The speaker had of necessity to use one of the three general types of speeches and, consequently, he had to consider the moral pattern of each. Because of their close association with oratory, the virtues had an intimate connection with everything designed to aid rhetorical inventiveness and, as Cicero makes clear in his discussion of the *loci communes*, the commonplaces were the most appropriate method of procedure for persuading to virtuous action.[2] Quintilian, in his educational theories, insists on the value of early training in virtuous habits. He manifests the same respect and admiration for the moral virtues which influenced the writings of his ancestors. The discussion of the *locus communis* in the *Institutio oratoria* follows the traditional concept with its emphasis on the importance of the commonplace in the virtue-vice theme.

This preoccupation with religion, morals, and right conduct existed throughout the Graeco-Roman world. Homer and the other early poets were thought of as the sources of the moral instructions from which later authors derived their aphorisms and maxims. The teacher of grammar, with whom the boys read these poets, took on something of the function of the Sunday school teacher as well as that of teacher of grammar, literature, and composition. The pagan moralists believed in a frank and thorough inculcation of pagan virtues such as wisdom, fortitude, justice, prudence, and temperance. Since the primary method

2. Cicero *De inventione* ii. 15. 49-50.

of instruction was oral, the moral lessons would be taught through the oration, whether that be the amplified *sententia* of the grammar school or the impassioned plea in the law court. In either instance, the *locus communis* with its treasury of didactic platitudes and its rhetorical adornment enhanced the speech and hastened the movement to persuasive action. Indeed, one could say of the pagans' contributions to moral philosophy:

> Morals, indeed, have been treated of by the noblest intellects of Greece and Rome. What they have left to us upon Continence, Temperance, Modesty, Justice, Courage, Greatness of Soul, demands your entire respect.[3]

The virtue-and-vice tradition, as the ancients understood it, came into the Middle Ages through the classical literature, but it was not acceptable in the context of pagan morality. The classics were to be purified in the regenerative waters of allegorical interpretation and the virtues which they extolled made companions of the Christian virtues. The medievalists had an unquenchable thirst for moralizing, and allegorized pagan myths indiscriminately, wringing moral from some with little or no warrant. For example, Virgil was regarded as a prophet of the Messias and his writing became popular with the Christians because of its ethical and philosophical tone. John of Salisbury read the *Aeneid* as an allegory of man, found the precepts of morality in the *Georgics,* and drew wisdom from the shepherds in the *Eclogues.* Lucan was regarded as a moral teacher, Horace as *ethicus,* and Terence as containing moral lessons in conduct and manners

3. William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino Da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1921), p. 127, quoting from a letter of Lionardo Bruni D'Arezzo concerning the study of literature.

of life.[4] Through a kind of allegorical telescoping, the medieval man could see underneath the pagan myths precious truths which furnished ample thought for meditation and examples of holy living.

The moral wisdom of the classics was collected and compiled in the many florilegia, dictionaries, and anthologies of the Middle Ages. These books were the source of the innumerable moral dicta which were taught in the schools and used in literature. Through these thesauri the commonplaces were brought into the Christian moral philosophy and adorned not only the moral virtues but also the more supernatural virtues of theology.

The topics or commonplaces provided the customary method through which instructions in virtuous living were presented. Sermons were often only a series of amplified themes or "places" from Holy Scripture. Many epistles were distinguished by the moral maxims or commonplaces scattered through their pages, and the few biographies which were not written specifically as examples of "holy living and holy dying" leaned heavily towards the didactic. This same ethical climate fostered the growth of the allegories in which the medieval writers bewailed or denounced the evils flourishing in their day. In these literary sermons, the characters were personifications of virtue or vice illustrated in the extended amplification of some didactic theme or *topos*.

The *topoi* of virtue and vice in the medieval literature of social complaint are the subject of a study made recently by Joseph Keller at Columbia University. The *topoi* which the author describes are related to the passing of time and its effect on virtue and vice, and describe the absence of virtue and the prevalence of vice:

4. Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1932), p. 24.

Vices which triumph because everything has radically altered its nature, or [as Keller puts it] "the world upside down"

Vices which triumph as the last days draw near

Vices which triumph because of the passing of the Golden Age

Vices which are in the ascendancy with the death of a good ruler [5]

These topics are thought of as the commonplaces in social literature. Keller assigns them certain metaphors which describe pictorially the triumph of vice:

Virtues are said to be cold, which implies that they are then actually vices

Virtues are said to be punished; they are usually exiled

Vices are said to be related as associates in crime

Vices are said to dwell in certain places

Vices or virtues are disguised as virtues or vices [6]

In this context the topics become vehicles of complaint rather than of instruction or refutation. They tend to "cry out" the triumph of vice, or, as Keller says: "The topics declare that vices triumph in the world as the last days draw near." The topics which Keller discusses correspond in some way with the traditional topic or "place" and its relation to virtue and vice. Yet, there is a difference; they are not topics in the sense of a "heading" or of a "seat of arguments." They are simply "current ideas" and "intellectual themes." A person employing a *topos* of this sort might be totally unaware of any rhetorical tradition of commonplaces such as this present work is

5. Joseph Keller, *The Topoi of Virtue and Vice: A Study of Some Features of Social Complaint in the Middle Ages,* p. 1.

6. *Ibid.,* p. 2.

concerned with. Something of this unawareness is present in Keller's study at least in so far as the classical method of amplification through a series of "analytic" and "subject" topics is concerned.

Ernst Curtius, whose theory of the topics is evident in Keller's work, deviates from the rhetorical tradition in his handling of the commonplaces. He thinks of the *topos* as a "literary commonplace" in the sense of something one encounters frequently in literary tradition, a device which repeats itself, with or without the author's intent to exploit an existing store of such devices, rather than as an argument for amplifying virtue or depreciating vice in a collection of which a writer consciously avails himself. Some of the topics Curtius lists are: *topic of conclusion*—a reference to the closing line of a poem such as Milton's "Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new"; *topic of modesty-formulae*—an excuse for the author's inability to accomplish his purpose; *topic of inexpressibility*—expression of poet's inability to cope with the theme (as Chaucer in *Parliament of Fowls* complains of his ignorance of love).[7] Such a concept of the topics departs considerably from that which one finds in the earlier literature explicitly concerned with the places. Curtius' commonplaces are not sources for arguments common to many subjects but the literary historian's compilation of common modes of procedure which he has observed among writers. They also retain little of the concern with vice and virtue native to the earlier literature on commonplaces.

The medieval writer's intense concern for the moral interpretation of everything was transmitted to the Renaissance without much loss of fervor. However, the moral philosophy which the Elizabethan spoke of and wrote

7. Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1953) pp. 79-97.

about looked more to the practical value of virtue in the manner of the classicists and was interested in the moral wisdom of the ethical man. Vives praises the man who is instructed in virtue:

> He who knows none of the arts but yet has a practical knowledge of virtue, and has formed and ordered his life by its rules, is so far from being blamed that he is deserving of praise.[8]

The pupil is to be trained in this moral wisdom "with adages and sentences, in a word, all those precepts of wisdom which have been collected from the observations of the wise, which have remained amongst the people, as if they were public wealth in a common store-house." [9] Vives advocates the relation of every subject with the cultivation of moral character that the pupils' minds may be led to virtue and to a reverence for piety.

The Elizabethans' first literary contact with virtue and vice came through the medium of the sententious sayings which the little boy learned in his first lessons at school and which accompanied him through the future years as a desirable adornment for any and all forms of discourse. The principal end of making themes, as Brinsley points out, was to furnish scholars with all store of choicest matter for the understanding, speaking, or writing of any subject and especially of "vertues and vices so as to worke in themselves a greater love of the vertue and hatred of the vice, and to be able with soundness of reason to draw others to their opinion." [10] The boys needed to be well versed in *sententiae,* Cato's *Disticha,* and the

8. Vives, *op. cit.,* p. 19.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 39.
10. Brinsley, *op. cit.,* p. 175.

Fables in order that they might possess a store of moral sentences for use in their compositions. The customary storehouse for sententious wisdom was the commonplace book, which, like the moral maxims, provided the boy with a *vademecum* for life. The *sententiae,* all of which admitted of entry in commonplace books and hence admitted of being considered commonplaces, were the "seeds" which expanded into various literary forms or into the "flowers" of rhetoric "beautifying" the dramatic and oratorical pieces.

In the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in textbooks, instruction manuals for the prince, and commonplace books, the theme of the praise of virtue and the vituperation of vice is virtually an obsession. The question arises as to whether this laudatory-vituperative type of writing was in effect the only type of writing for which a boy was trained. If so, what were the psychological foundations for such a philosophy in which the business of all expression was somehow to praise a man for virtue or dispraise him for vice?

The educational works of the Renaissance indicate that despite the prevalence of dialectic or logic, in a certain sense rhetoric was the elementary basis for all instruction, regardless of the particular arts or sciences followed, which meant, of course, training in a skillful and effective use of the places or topics. Since the rhetorical places were inextricably bound up with moral sentences, aphorisms, and proverbial sayings, as has been pointed out in Chapter III, any training in the use of the topics would involve a familiarity with such moral dicta. The long tedious hours spent by the students in memorizing, paraphrasing, and expanding axioms of virtue would so color their way of thinking that everything and everybody tended to be viewed through one or the other set of glasses as clothed

in the whiteness of virtue or the blackness of vice. And the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gives at least surface evidence of this state of mind.

Virtue was invariably associated with reason by the Renaissance man who believed that the moral order in human society was preserved by reason, and that reason was characterized by wisdom and virtue.[11] Hoskyns defines virtue as "a quality settled in reason" ("virtus est habitus rationi consentaneus").[12] The one requirement for rulers, as Elyot specifies for the prince, was that they be virtuous and wise, "ornate with vertue and wisedome." [13] It was a "commonplace" in English belief that the harmony and peace of the kingdom depended upon the rational actions of the king, upon his wisdom and virtue, and that when he deviated from this line of conduct, disorder reigned not only in the realm but in nature as well. In this situation, too, where rulers were trained to be virtuous and wise, the moral precepts embodied in the commonplaces were applied.

The implicit faith which the Renaissance manifested in the value of the moral dicta and maxims seems almost incredible in view of the actual literary and scientific production of the period, often so far from moral in total import. Prefaces of the commonplace books reveal something of the effects which the author hoped or at least said that he hoped his or others' writing would produce. Francis Meres in *Wits Common-Wealth* gives good evidence of this:

Being a magazine of choice moral Precepts, grave Admo-

11. George R. Coffman, "John Gower in His Most Significant Role," *Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays* ("University of Colorado Studies," October 1945; Boulder, Colo.), pp. 52-61.

12. Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

13. Elyot, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

nitions, divine Sentences, with abundance of very edifying and political Maxims for the true Regulation of Life and Behavior: The whole containing not only useful and excellent Matter, but the Quintessence and Marrow of what is delivered in the Works of the most eminent ancient writers with many illustrious Examples of the greatest and most noble Vertues, together with their Rules of Patience, Humility, Justice, etc., which have been by all civiliz'd Nations, always deservedly celebrated and esteem'd.[14]

Richard Rainolde places the perfection of all moral philosophy—oeconomic, political, and ethical—in the teaching of Aesop's *Fables:*

> The Philosophers did never so lively sette forthe and teache in their scholes and audience, what vertue and godlie life were, as Aesope did in his Fables. Citees, and common wealthes, maie learne out of his fables, godlie concorde and unitie, by the whiche meanes, common wealthes flourisheth, and kingdoms are saved. Herein ample matters riseth to godlie lawes, in faithfull obedience: the subiectes also to love and serve their prince, in al his affaires and busines. The father maie learne to bring up, and instructe his childe thereby. The child also to love and obeie his parents. The huge and monsterous vices, are by his vertuous doctrine defaced and extirpated.[15]

Besides the books of places which furnished political and moral wisdom to the rulers and their subjects, there were the lives of illustrious men whose example offered certain proof that virtue was rewarded and vice punished. These biographies were filled with abundant proverbial lore for the edification of those who read. Sir Thomas

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14 Francis Meres, *Wits Common-Wealth* (London: W. Taylor, 1722 [1st ed.: 1597]), Preface, fol. A3 r.

15. Rainolde, *op. cit.,* fol. v v.

North, in the translation of Plutarch's *Lives,* writes to the Queen in his dedication that there is no book that "teacheth so much honor, love, obedience, reverence, zeal, and devotion to princes." [16] Another type of biography in which virtue was extolled, but through the portrayal of vice, was *A Mirror for Magistrates.* In the preface to the 1563 edition, William Baldwin informs the reader that the chief end of the work was to set forth vice so that "here as in a looking-glass you shall see (if any vice be in you) how the like hath been punished in others heretofore, . . . I trust it will be a good occasion to move you to the sooner amendment." [17] Innumerable *sententiae* are interspersed among the lines of the "Induction" as well as in the narration of the lives of the unfortunate princes for the instruction of others.

Moral philosophy with its precepts of virtuous instruction was not confined to the political domain alone. It reached into every part of society with its concern for wisdom and virtue. The commonplace books were the repositories from which the precepts for ethical living were learned. The popularity and importance which such collections had in Tudor days has not been matched in any century. There were the books of commonplaces for the schoolboys, either supplied by the instructor or made up by the boy himself. Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* supplied fair flowers for the man of eloquence and learning. *The Arte of Englishe Poesie,* as Puttenham explicitly states, was written for courtiers and particularly for ladies, to assist them in composing and appreciating polite verse.

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16. Sir Thomas North, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans . . . By Plutarch of Chaeronea,* trans. Thomas North (1579), quoted in Rollins and Baker, *The Renaissance in England* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1954), p. 546.

17. *A Mirror for Magistrates,* ed. William Baldwin (1559), quoted in Rollins and Baker, *op. cit.,* p. 270.

Hoskyns included in his treatise instructions for letter-writing which appealed to the practical needs of the middle class, while Robert Johnson wrote in a similar manner for the courtier. Through all of these collections, regardless of purpose or style, there was woven a pattern of moral conduct which clothed the individual's life and actions in a fashion suited to a humanistic society. Through all of them the pattern of moral conduct was strung on sententious threads which could be easily caught up and tied into a particular occasion.

Virtue and vice in literature.—Aside from the practical value for ethical living which the commonplaces offered, they provided adornment for the pages of poetry and prose. Poetry had always been recognized as a vehicle for moral instruction. The themes of the ancient poets illustrated exhortations to virtue, dehortation from vice, or the praise of some noted person or thing. The habit of verse-making was begun in the schools as soon as the boys had learned to compose Latin prose. Brinsley says that "the making of a verse is nothing but the turning of words forth of the Grammatical order, into the Rhetoricall, in some kinde of metre." For store and variety of matter, the commonplace books were used so the pupils might have "reference whereby to turne of a sodaine to matters of all sorts, in the most exquisite and pure Poets: to have some direction both for matter and imitation." [18] The same moral maxims and epigrams which were used for developing a theme became the topic line for verse-making, and, in later years, these commonplaces frequently provided the poet with the framework of his poem.

The Renaissance poets based their defense of the didactic use of poetry on the ancients' regard for its moral

18. Brinsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 192, 196.

function. Puttenham in his description of the origins of poetry emphasizes the themes of praise or vituperation as they existed in the various types of poetry. The first poems, according to Puttenham, were made in plain meters similar to sermons which the poets used for reprehending the people's vices. *Satire,* we are told, the earliest kind of poetry, was the most bitter kind of invective against vice and vicious men. When this became ineffective, comedy was introduced which was directed against common folk, not princes. The *Old Comedy* attacked particular persons (similar to vituperation) but the later *New Comedy* attacked man's faults in general not touching any one man by name (similar to the dispraise of the *locus communis*). *Tragedies* were written only for men in high estate whose tyrannies and vices were depicted after their death to show the "mutabilitie of fortune," and the "just punishment of God in revenge of a vicious and evill life." All virtuous persons were rewarded with commendation for their well-doing, and the princes above all others were lauded with honors and praises. These men, who most resembled the gods by their more than human virtues, were "praised by a second degree of laud":

> shewing their high estates, their Princely genealogies and pedegrees, mariages, aliances, and such noble exploites, as they had done in the affaires of peace and of warre to the benefit of their people and countries, by invention of any noble science, or profitable art.[19]

Puttenham concludes his narration by mentioning the devices of the poet:

19. Puttenham, *op. cit.,* pp. 30-35.

> Wherefore the Poet in praising the maner of life or death of anie meane person, did it by some little dittie or Epigram or Epitaph in few verses and meane stile conformable to his subject. So have you how the immortal gods were praised by hymes, the great Princes and heroicke personages by ballades or praise called Encomia, both of them by historicall reports of great gravitie and majestie, the inferiour persons by other silent poems.[20]

There were other Renaissance men, both poets and rhetoricians, who spoke in praise of the moral teaching of poetry. Philip Sidney devotes much space and rhetorical zeal to the didactic purpose of this art which leads the way to virtue:

> Poetry is a hart-ravishing knowledge which setteth vertue so out in her best culours as to lead and draw us to as high a perfection, as our degenerate souls . . . can be capable of.[21]

Similarly, Thomas Wilson adds his voice to the acclaim:

> For undoubtedly there is no one tale among all the poets, but under the same is comprehended some thing that pertaineth either to the amendment of manners; to the knowledge of the truth, to the setting forth of Nature's works, or else to the understanding of some notable thing done.[22]

John Rainolds, in a rather florid manner, comes to the defense of poetry with the "oration demonstrative,"

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20. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
21. Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy* (1595), in *Complete Works*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1923), III, 11.
22. Wilson, *Arte of Rhetorique*, fol. 99ᵛ.

which "standeth either in praise, or dispraise of some one." *The Praise of Poetry* follows the regular divisions of an oration and applies the places of logic in developing the topic *confirmatio:* causes, definitions, effects, similarities, and the like. Rainolds argues his statement from the four causes of Aristotle: efficient cause (poetry originated with God, product of divine inspiration); material cause (poetry is persuasive power); formal cause (persuasion is effected by the veil of fiction or allegory); final cause (the ultimate end of poetry is to ennoble mankind).[23] Rainolds' acknowledgment of the persuasive power of poetry allies it with rhetoric but, as he says, with a superior kind of rhetoric which affects the emotions more deeply because of the vividness and force of the words and images.

What was the role of the commonplace in the moral realm in which poetry existed? Probably the closest affinity between the *locus communis* and poetic literature was the topic of praise or, less frequently, dispraise. As Latin had moved out of practical life, Renaissance educational tradition had substituted the demonstrative oration for the judicial, so popular in ancient rhetoric, and with that transfer the *locus communis* became more of an encomium featuring praise of the virtue of an *individual* than the commonplace praising and rewarding *virtue* as an abstract quality. This praise of an individual finds its way in Renaissance poetry where it indirectly teaches, moves, and delights. The sonnets, allegories, dramatic poems, and epics all contribute their part in exhorting to virtue, either directly as in *The Faerie Queen* or indirectly through sententious counsels as in *A Mirror for Magistrates.* Even the verse in praise of an individual's

23. John Rainolds, *Oratio in laudem artis poeticae* (c. 1572), introd. and comm. William Ringler, trans. Walter Allen, Jr. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 11.

physical beauty implies, of course, his possession of virtue; if order was the result of wisdom and virtue, then the beauty of the body with its integrity must presuppose some virtue. At least the Renaissance mentality reasoned thus.

Just as the precepts of moral philosophy and the various uses of the commonplace worked together to produce a didactic poetry, so they contributed to the various prose types. Several of these prose works originated in terms of the commonplaces and were either an amplification of a moral platitude or a sententious exhortation skillfully interspersed in the narrative discourse. The essay, the moral discourse, and the character were particularly susceptible to moral interpretation and were more commonly dependent on the commonplaces than other literary types.

The early English essays show the influence of the commonplace book, being themselves little more than a collection of scattered meditations—quotations, sentences, anecdotes. "A few loose sentences and that's all" describes well the essays published by Bacon in 1597; the aphorisms which he collected under headings represented the selections from one of his commonplace books.[24] John Florio, in his address to the reader prefacing his translation of Montaigne's *Essays* (1603), remarks, "Why, but essays are but men's school themes pieced together; you

24. Father McNamee notes that Bacon conceived of the revision of the original *Essays* and of the composition of the new ones as a type of rhetorical amplification from a comparison of the roots of some of the essays with the full-blown form. The roots were discovered under headings of *Antitheta* in the *De augmentis*. Bacon compares the topical antithesis to a seed from which the flower of the fully developed composition blossoms. Maurice B. McNamee, S.J., "Francis Bacon's Attitude Toward Grammar and Rhetoric in the Light of Tradition" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of English, St. Louis University, 1945), p. 389.

might as well say, several texts." [25] A glance at one of the essays illustrate this. The essay "That We Should Not Judge of Our Happiness until after Our Death" begins with a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* "We must expect of man the latest day, Nor, ere he die, he's happy can we say." This adage is then paraphrased; it is amplified by examples from ancient history and from myth; quotations from the classics are inserted generously; an exhortation is added; and the essay concludes with a brief epilog applying the moral.[26]

The essays were mixtures of both Christian and classical elements and drew their material from the popular collections of proverbs and adages: Erasmus's *Adages,* and *Apophthegms,* Cicero's *Selected Sentences,* or Valerius Maximus's *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium.* Plutarch's *Moralia* and Seneca's *Moral Essays* furnished the model upon which the thematic proverbs or epigrams were built. In their simple form the essays had the structure of a school exercise such as the development of the chria or commonplace. William Crane describes how a moral topic was thus expanded:

> Sometimes an explanatory opening to an essay was effected by means of a simile or a metaphor. Causes, effects, antecedents, consequences, analogies, contraries, examples, and testimony of the ancients might contribute to the development. In addition to the processes of logical analysis, . . . "topics of rhetorical invention" served for amplification. For instance, a treatment of justice might be prolonged by demonstrating that it is honest, profitable, pleasant, and necessary. . . . Often a maxim, an apophthegm, or an exhortation closed the discussion.[27]

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25. Quoted in Rollins and Baker, *op. cit.,* p. 569.
26. *Ibid.,* pp. 570-71.
27. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance,* p. 139.

The essay, then, with its moral theme, its sententious embellishment, and its development through the topics common to the *locus communis* can rightly be included in the literary types which taught virtue through the commonplaces.

The moral discourse needs little special evidence to prove its essential purpose of praising virtue. This literary form depended more upon the store of the commonplace books for its precepts of wisdom than the essay. Often these places in moral discourse were strung together rather loosely, but at other times they were imbedded in elaborate framework within the discourse. The *Governour* of Elyot illustrates this interspersing of various material for amplification. Throughout the work are scattered "sayenges of most notable autours," histories, fables, and wise sentences which embodied good doctrine and sound counsels. Elyot made use of similes and examples for expansion of his subject in addition to the regular dialectical topics. Many of these are culled from the ancient philosophers, from Plutarch, and from Valerius Maximus.[28] Most of the moral discourses, like Elyot's, which were written during the sixteenth century in England were but patchworks of moral dicta pillaged from books of proverbs, examples, and commonplaces of illustrious quotations. Nashe, Greene, and Breton are among the moralists who sought the treasures of their didactic instruction from prepared compilations rather than from the ingenious wit of their own talents.

The character as a literary type comes closest to the commonplace in its concern with virtue and vice. In fact, it is an illustration of a virtue or vice, with appropriate praise or dispraise, as applied to a general "type" of person

28. Elyot, *op. cit.*

more than to a particular one. The character, like the essay and moral discourse, grew out of rhetorical exercise. The boys were assiduously drilled in the rhetorical figures among which were those particularly applicable to the character sketch—*illustratio,* ethopoeia, prosopopoeia, and *descriptio.* The figure of thought, "character," as this exercise was termed in rhetoric, developed from the topic *descriptio.* If the subject of the description was an abstract virtue or vice, a person, either real or imaginary, was used for personifying the virtue or vice and producing a more vivid effect. The description was expanded, then, according to the dialectical or "analytic" topics as definition, division, etymology, and the like. The places of rhetorical invention were used to extend the amplification and adorn it, as justice, honorable, profitable, pleasant—topics proper to the commonplace.[29] Thomas Blount gives instructions for developing a "character":

> But he that will truly characterize a man, in a feigned Story, must first learn handsomly to describe a humour, a passion, a vertue, a vice, and therein, keeping decent proportion, add but names, and knit together the accidents and encounters. This perfect expressing of all qualities, is learn'd out of Aristotle's tenth book of Moral Philosophy.[30]

This is nothing more than the development of a topic, probably gleaned from a harvest of commonplaces, universal in its nature, and applicable to a particular person. Such an exercise is reminiscent of the use of the *locus communis* in a more formal oration as it is brought into the thesis for later application in the hypothesis.

29. Crane, *op. cit.,* pp. 151-61.
30. Blount, *op. cit.,* p. 36.

Erasmus assembled his remarks concerning the character under the heading "Personae descriptio" in the second book of the *De copia.* He suggested the study of the characters of Theophrastus, which, he notes, looked like the work of a grammarian, not of a philosopher. There were "moral types" in his examples such as "amantis, luxoriosi, avari, voracis," and these were to be described according to the eleven places of Cicero (the "circumstance" places for persons or things). Erasmus, like the other writers of his day, taught the necessity of decorum in describing persons so that each would fit into the prescribed "type" for his particular situation.[31]

Joseph Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices* had for its primary purpose moral reformation. His classical model was Theophrastus who had sketched the earliest pictures of the character of the vices, yet Hall's characters are more subjective in description and treatment. His sketch usually begins with a generalization about the moral quality under consideration, develops through such "places" as examples, figures, personification, and adds some concrete data of characteristic behavior in particular circumstances. The conclusion is conspicuously rhetorical with balanced phrases, *sententiae,* or elaborate metaphors. The praise of the virtue or the denunciation of the vice is maintained on a general or "type" level which makes it an appropriate homiletic for every man. And this was Hall's intention as he writes in the preface:

> But if thou shalt hence abiure those vices, which before thou thoughtest not ill-favoured, or fall in love with any of these goodly faces of vertue; or shalt hence finde where thou hast anie little touch of these evils, to cleere thy

31. Erasmus, *De copia,* Lib. II, "Personae descriptio," p. 79-81.

selfe, or where any defect in these graces supply it, neither of us shall need to repent of our labor.[32]

The characters which became a popular genre in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, either as a particular type or within the body of drama or narration, were generally vivid presentations of the character and conduct of a moral type. The adherence to the doctrine of decorum and the strong moral inclinations of these writers tended to make their portrayals more stereotyped and less realistic, especially when virtue or vice was the theme.

The character, as the other literary forms, was assisted in its development by the utilization of the commonplace books. The *sententiae*, phrases, verses, and classical allusions in particular would half create a type for the reader to complete in his own mind. The phrases would be used for observing decorum in characterization, the *sententiae* would provide the theme expressing the epigrammatic truth to be moralized, and classical allusions would provide examples. A very apt commentary referring to the use of the collections of commonplaces in literature is given by Benjamin Boyce in his study of the character as a literary genre:

> In the phrase books the philosophy and literature of Greece and Rome were pillaged in little fragments which, with small flints and blocks of Christian origin, were sorted and collected in bins from which the not very energetic and not very scholarly type writer could choose ornaments and props for his own constructions. . . . the

32. Joseph Hall, *The Works of Joseph Hall*, "Characters of Vertues and Vices: in two Bookes" (London, 1647), p. 151.

doctrine of decorum and the main ideas of classical ethics could be found among them.[33]

The search for the sources of knowledge is always directed to the same places, the phrase books or commonplace books, and the hunter is sure to discover there an abundant wealth of moral maxims which he can use to advantage in his discourses.

The focus of the commonplace on virtue and vice remained constant and sharp during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries despite the rampant confusion in the treatment of the rhetorical places. The point of view from which the Renaissance man beheld all the activities of life, whether political, literary, social, or ethical, was always the same, that of moral philosophy, or the more practical virtue-or-vice attitude. The approach to this didactic outlook was ordinarily by way of the commonplace, either through the moral platitudes, which bore the weight of ancient authority, or through the more direct praise of virtue.

One must reckon with the confusion in the Renaissance understanding of the term *locus communis* in any attempt to clarify the relationship existing between virtue and vice on the one hand and the commonplace on the other. From the preceding chapters with their discussion of the dialectical and rhetorical places, it should be evident that sententious maxims, figures of sentences, used primarily for style, dialectical and rhetorical topics, examples, snippets or condensations of orations which we have styled speeches-within-speeches, fables, in brief, all items, of whatever provenience, found excerpted

33. Benjamin Boyce, *The Theophrastan Character in England to* 1642 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 81.

within the pages of a book of commonplaces, were considered as *loci communes.* Love for the sententious, which figured so prominently in Elizabethan life, was in reality a love for the commonplaces. In what other light can one explain the exaggerated importance attached to the collection of such material? The principal function of the books of commonplaces was to hoard up a store of those treasures which the orator could use for the embellishment of his discourse, or, since all discourse was concerned with virtue and vice, for the adornment of virtue. But this humanistic assemblage of all the arts and sciences with their precepts of learning was not a merely intellectual tour de force. It functioned primarily as an aid to the development of the virtuous man, for, as has been pointed out, virtue and wisdom were theoretical allies in all forms of writing which the commonplaces nourished.

Psychologically, the Renaissance boy was trained from the earliest days at school in the precepts of virtue by his constant traffic with "phrase books," as collections of commonplaces were often called, and the importance of this moral teaching increased with every new exercise. Verse-making, begun in the first years of the grammar school, was a natural vehicle for transmitting moral precepts since poetry had always been didactic in purpose. The essay, the character, and the moral discourse were the prose forms most commonly taught; each of them had its conception in the matrix of the commonplace. There was relatively little formal training in narration and exposition since this kind of writing did not lend itself so readily to didactic themes. When these literary forms did appear, they were usually warped onto the virtue-and-vice theme either by the insertion of some moral exhortation or by the personifying of virtue and vice through the characters. William Painter, John Lyly, and George

Pettie all made their narrative tales the occasion for didactic teaching. The student's mentality was so conditioned by the habit of conceiving of everyone and everything in terms of virtue or vice that when he reached manhood and his career, in the world of politics, of literature, of the court, or whatever it may have been, he continued viewing life through the telescope of the commonplace tradition which was focused on virtuous living.

Summary and Conclusion

The history of the commonplace with its focus on the Renaissance has been rounded out and its basic concepts have been presented. This history has been traced, in a general way, through the ancient classical periods, through the Middle Ages, and has culminated in the Renaissance tradition with its emphasis on humanistic learning, running well through the seventeenth century.

A general notion of the *locus communis* has been established including its function as a topical heading, a seat of arguments, and a little oration or "speech-within-a-speech." The position of the commonplace in the structure of the oration has been described as well as its place in the art of embellishment and its foundation in the moral virtues. These ideas have been investigated in the light of the dialectical and rhetorical theories as they existed in a particular contemporary situation.

The unsteadiness in the various meanings and implications of the commonplace has been discussed. The term commonplace was used synonymously with topic *(topos, locus)*—its most general meaning—thesis, passage, oration, and a multitude of other things. When adapted by the educators and scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the topic or commonplace included the matter covered in every conceivable subject of the arts or sciences. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric, topos* was divided into "common"

and "special"—the former referring to general ideas which could be applied to all arguments and the latter to particular ideas applicable only to certain subjects. Cicero increased the number of topics by shifting the bearing of "common" found in Aristotle to include topics "common" to all orations, "common" to the prosecutor, and "common" to both sides of an argument. In the Renaissance, any heading or topic which could be included within the pages of a commonplace book or "copy book" (collections of useful quotations or thoughts) became a *locus communis.*

The commonplaces, as they originated in the rhetoric and dialectic of ancient Greece and Rome, were the general and universal ideas used in all argumentation and persuasion. Their primary purpose was, at least nominally, instruction in the moral virtues, for moral teaching was thought of as applied to all kinds of discourse but particularly to the forensic oration, in which virtue was amplified with a view to its being rewarded and vice depreciated with a view to its being punished. The dialectical places, such as definition, genus, and species, were the topics of inquiry that contributed to truth and knowledge or to choice and avoidance. The rhetorical places, such as justice, nobleness, and similar concepts, derived from the matter of ethics generally, were more adaptable to persuasion of the emotions than to intellectual conviction of a scientific sort. The rhetorical places were also used for amplification and embellishment of the oration. Sometimes an individual commonplace (fortitude, for example) was itself amplified in the manner of a miniature speech and inserted in a more formal oration as a "speech-within-a-speech" for purposes of magnifying virtue or minimizing vice. As a miniature speech, such a commonplace topic was adorned with the tropes and

schemes of rhetorical style that it might more effectively delight and move the audience. At other times the commonplace, thought of in a still somewhat different fashion as a sententious maxim (for example, "The greatest virtue lies in action") was inserted at various points in an oration in order that its moral content might add dignity and elegance to the speech.

The medieval writers based their theory of the *loci communes* on those of ancient Rome and Greece, but in practice they placed exaggerated emphasis on style and touted the commonplaces for the adornment and dilation of poetry, for amplification in preaching, and for elegance and distinction in the epistolary genre. The conventional forms of the places contributed to a somewhat stereotyped process of thinking which was evident especially in biography and the *ars poetica*. The intellectual content of the topics was relegated to ecclesiastical and theological arguments in dialectic and the adornment of speech was consigned to rhetoric. Virtue and vice continued to be prominent in oratorical themes, in sermons, biographies, and moral allegories. The medieval preacher and writer left a new mark on the traditional commonplace as they adapted it to the needs of contemporary experience. The topics became not only "seats of argument" for the lawyer, the theologian, and the physician, but also, for the first time, became co-partners with Christian themes in a new culture.

The concept of the commonplace as the Renaissance student and instructor understood it differed somewhat from the classical idea. The places are viewed in two divergent ways, which have been styled "analytic" and "subject" topics, corresponding in some way respectively to the "common" and "special" *topoi* of Aristotle. The "analytic" topic was usually thought of as a concept

which could be used in asking oneself questions about a subject and which would generate ideas concerning the subject: for example, such "places" as definition, division, etymology, and relation, when applied to a particular subject, would "spin out" the full meaning of that subject. The "subject" topic or heading, on the other hand, represented a heading more usable for organizing material gathered in a commonplace book, where one "located" an argument named according to the subject matter of its contents, such as virtue, physics, peace, or ethics. Such topics could hardly function as questions to "spin" an idea. Under the "subject" topic one could find a store of material for expanding and adorning one's discourse. The "subject" topics are similar to Aristotle's "special" *topoi,* which treat of particular classes of things, and yet they are too whimsically conceived and assembled to correspond to Aristotle's concept, vague as this itself is.

Other views of the commonplace relate it in special ways to the oration. The *locus communis,* as just explained, was often considered as a "speech-within-a-speech," that is, the topic or theme was expanded as a little oration and inserted in some longer speech, usually near the conclusion. At times the *loci communes,* in the other sense of moral sentences, were scattered at random throughout an oration to give dignity and beauty to the speech. In either instance, the commonplace was regarded as an adornment in any oration because of its moral content and was itself considered worthy of embellishment by the tropes and figures of style.

A further division of the places into dialectical and rhetorical has been made use of in an effort to clarify, at least theoretically, the position of dialectic and rhetoric and the topics they employed. The dialectical topics furnished the intellectual content of the argument; they

were recognized as the source of the major proposition in any syllogism, an argument applicable to both sides of a controversy, and as the decisive factor brought into the thesis for persuading the judge to reward virtue and punish vice. The whole purpose of the dialectical commonplace seemed to be concerned with moving the argument from the "hypothesis" (particular matter) to the "thesis" (general truth), where the commonplace was brought into the oration for embellishment and persuasion. The inclination to associate the commonplace with the thesis or general question corresponds to the original understanding of the *locus communis* with its universal character. The dialectical topics themselves were, however, not confined in practice to the extrinsic and intrinsic places, but included humanistic or "subject" topics. In their efforts to categorize the topics according to the three general orations, the rhetoricians became hopelessly confused. Consequently, the categories of Aristotle, his commonplace arguments, the topics of Cicero, and any or all of the "subject" topics from the arts were grouped in the same lists or "seats of arguments" with little if any distinction.

The rhetorical topics, whose function was to amplify and adorn virtue, grew out of a more specifically oratorical or "persuasive" approach to the commonplace. These topics were not admitted by Ramists, who made all "arguments" dialectical or, what was to them the same thing, logical. They were closely related to wisdom and eloquence and, consequently, required copious invention and stylistic adornment. The use of the commonplace for the praise of virtue and dispraise of vice in the forensic oration, as it was generally thought of in the classical tradition, gave way to a more ceremonial kind of praise in which virtue was displayed more for emulation than

for reward. Training for the perfect orator, consistent with an oral tradition, continued in the Renaissance. As a result, the literature became primarily dramatic and oratorical rather than narrative and expository. The rhetorical topics by their pleasing style were to make effective the praise of virtue. The places contained not only the "subject" topics of virtue or vice but also the places of the arts and sciences and the tropes and figures of style—religion, metaphysics, plants, nature, hyperbole, allegory, exclamation.

Underlying the dialectical and rhetorical theory of the places was the metaphorical imagery which was based on the notion of "invention" with its implication that literary composition involved something like movement about a spatial field in which one "located" ideas which were stored in "seats" or regions of the mind. This imagery lent support to and was supported by current figurative concepts of knowledge as consisting of "objects" located in space and even in some vague way transferable from one place to another.

The mental process titled "invention" was described as "hunting" for topics, identifying their location, and exploring their "contents"—previously stored in regions of the mind (or the pages of a book). The process of composition was frequently interpreted in terms of some kind of local motion or covering of ground in a search for topics to discuss and assemble in oratorical and literary forms. When applied to the psychological activity really attendant upon composition in its initial stages, this method, of course, loses much of its validity. Mental concepts are not neatly isolated in compartments; it is only after a great complex of psychological activity, much of it extremely obscure and never yet reduced to any kind of spatial analogy, that composition results. But the

commonplace tradition existed as a practical pedagogical setting with little, if any, philosophical foundation, and did not concern itself with explaining its own presuppositions, many of which, if not all, were highly contestable.

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the *locus communis* was assigned a much more comprehensive area of application than the classical orators had afforded it. Scarcely an occasion of speaking or writing arose when it was not sought for and applied to the discourse. The places were not only literary ornaments but practical counsels in their statements of the universal truths upon which they were based. The presence of collections of commonplaces for use in school, in the court, the pulpit, or in social gatherings testifies to the practical value with which the Renaissance invested them. They were multi-purpose means for invention, disposition, and elocution; they invaded every field of literature and every class of society and were of such variety that they provided moral norms of conduct, wisdom in practical counsels, and delightful ornaments of a pleasing style.

Virtue and vice, the original joint theme of the commonplace which gave to it its universal character, was never lost sight of in the Renaissance use of the *locus communis;* in fact, it received even more attention. The application of the principles of moral philosophy invaded every domain: education, government, society, and literature. With the transference of the oration from the judicial to the demonstrative kind, the commonplace became more of an encomium praising the virtue of an individual than the praising and rewarding of virtue as an abstract quality—virtue was witnessed rather than rewarded. The approach to this virtue-or-vice point of view was through the commonplace with its wealth of

sententious material, and the source for this material was found in the commonplace book. These collections were not a merely perfunctory exercise, but they were functional in the development of the virtuous man, for virtue and wisdom were theoretical allies in all forms of writing and speaking. From the earliest days of his school life the Renaissance boy was trained in the precepts of virtue, which were embodied in practically every exercise, and this training accompanied him through life and resulted in a mentality conditioned to the observation of every one and every thing in terms of virtue and vice.

The commonplace book with its encyclopedic array of topics or places was thought of as a compend of knowledge displayed in a systematic pattern of some kind and producing a "circle" of learning or a unity of the arts and sciences. The thirst for accumulating universal knowledge, so characteristic of the Renaissance writers, was partially satisfied by the commonplace collections. The Ramist "method," popularized by such German encylopedists as Alsted and Keckermann, made possible a more diagrammatic approach to knowledge. Each individual subject or heading in the commonplace books was mentally and typographically "departmentalized," divided and subdivided until all that could be known about that subject seemed to be included under its topical heading. This arrangement of the material gave the impression that all knowledge of the arts and sciences could be "contained" within the pages of the commonplace books. Alsted, for example, called his collection an ordered assembly of all things which ought to be learned by man, an encyclopedia or "system of all systems." This strongly German tradition asserts itself much later even in Coleridge, who described an encyclopedia (or commonplace book) as containing the arts of grammar, logic,

rhetoric, ethics, and metaphysics which explained the ultimate principle of the previously mentioned arts and completed the form of the "circle" of knowledge.[1] The importance which was attributed to the commonplace books in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as storehouses of learning indicates that these collections were more than a stereotyped anthology. They represented in some way the virtue, wisdom, and eloquence which the Renaissance orator desired.

The concept of the commonplace, as it has been explored in the period between 1500 and 1700 and interpreted in the educational and literary works of a cross section of writers, both English and international, might be summarized as something of a hybrid product resulting from the crossing of the classical theory with the Renaissance theory and educational practice. The general basic notions of the commonplace, derived from Greece and Rome, were retained, but many of the attendant details were altered. In the Elizabethan age the commonplace treated general and universal ideas but its scope was broadened to include topics of encyclopedic proportions. The praise of virtue or the dispraise of vice lent itself to every kind of embellishment and amplification which the sententious figures and tropes of style could provide, but the focus point was more often on the topic of *laus* or *vituperatio* of an individual than on the praise of an abstract virtue. The dialectical and rhetorical places became topical headings and seats of arguments, not only for those *loci communes* assigned by the classicists but also for all those implied in the humanistic studies. The

1. Alice D. Snyder, *Coleridge on Logic and Learning* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1929), p. 35, quoted in Dwight Culler, *John Henry Newman, The Imperial Intellect* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 176-77.

confusion of the ancients regarding the kinds and names of the topics became even more confusing for the Renaissance rhetorician who tried to be classical and contemporary at the same time. The commonplace continued to be conceived of as an *oratio,* but with the shift from the judicial situation to the epideictic, the oration developed into a ceremonial speech of declamation. Perhaps the most important distinction between the classical commonplace mentality and that of the Renaissance was in the way each conceived of knowledge. While the ancient orators conceived of the topics and their seats of arguments as located in the mental areas of the mind in which thought processes developed and were expressed in the oral tradition of the spoken word, the Renaissance teacher and schoolboy tended more to locate his topics and their accumulated wisdom outside the mind on the pages of his commonplace book where thoughts were manipulated like objects. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century man was concerned with the written word much more than the ancient rhetorician had been. In this situation, the commonplace as a "speech-within-a-speech" became, not a second speech or epilog brought into the thesis for persuading the judge, but rather an expanded *sententia* or proverb of some kind inserted variously through moral discourses, dramatic presentations, or allegorical poems both for didactic and artistic purposes.

These varied concepts of the *locus communis* were deeply rooted in the Renaissance boy during the first years of his education and never ceased to grow and produce fruitful flowers in the years of his manhood. A proper understanding of the method of this "topical" training, so singular and so all-inclusive, enriches our understanding of Elizabethan literature and opens the way for many fresh insights. The passion of Lyly for

heaping up mythological lore and his exuberant virtuosity in striving to dazzle his comrades and the public by his copiousness of invention appears in better perspective. E. K.'s notes to the *Shepherdes Calender* of Spenser appear more meaningful, and Bacon's method of developing many of his essays is unexpectedly illuminated. In fact, once the modern reader of Elizabethan literature becomes familiar with the rhetorical principles which were imbibed by every Renaissance schoolboy and their relation to the commonplaces, he will find on every page examples of the directing influence of these exercises. And then, the "commonplace" will have become the "unusual."

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mon" or general which could be applied to any oration or any subject, and the "specific" topic which referred only to particular subjects, such as one of the sciences or specialized branches of knowledge.

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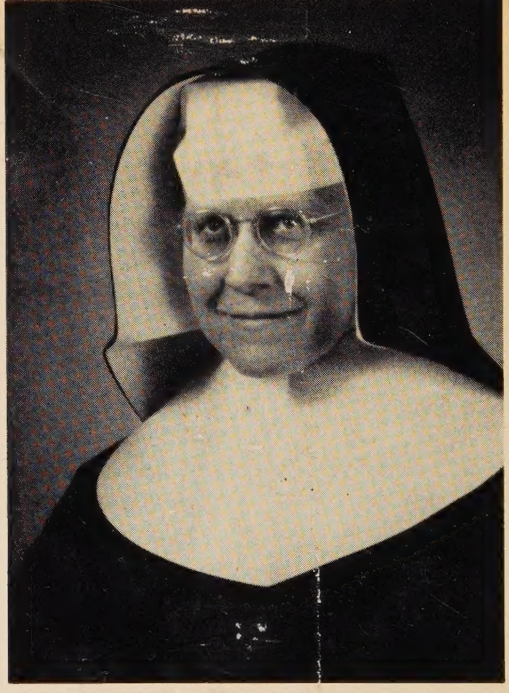

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Sister Joan Marie Lechner, O.S.U., who is now the President of Brescia College, was received into the Ursuline Order at Mt. St. Joseph Convent, Maple Mount, Kentucky. She holds a B.A. degree from Loras College, Iowa, from which she graduated *magna cum laude,* and a Ph.D. in English from St. Louis University.

For a number of years Sister served as a high-school teacher in the Kentucky towns of Owensboro, New Haven, and Loretto; she was also the principal of St. Francis High School in Loretto. Coming to Brescia College, in Owensboro, she served on the teaching staff and acted in the capacity of Treasurer. In 1960 she assumed her present position as President of the College.

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